

*An ECHO from  
PARNASSUS*

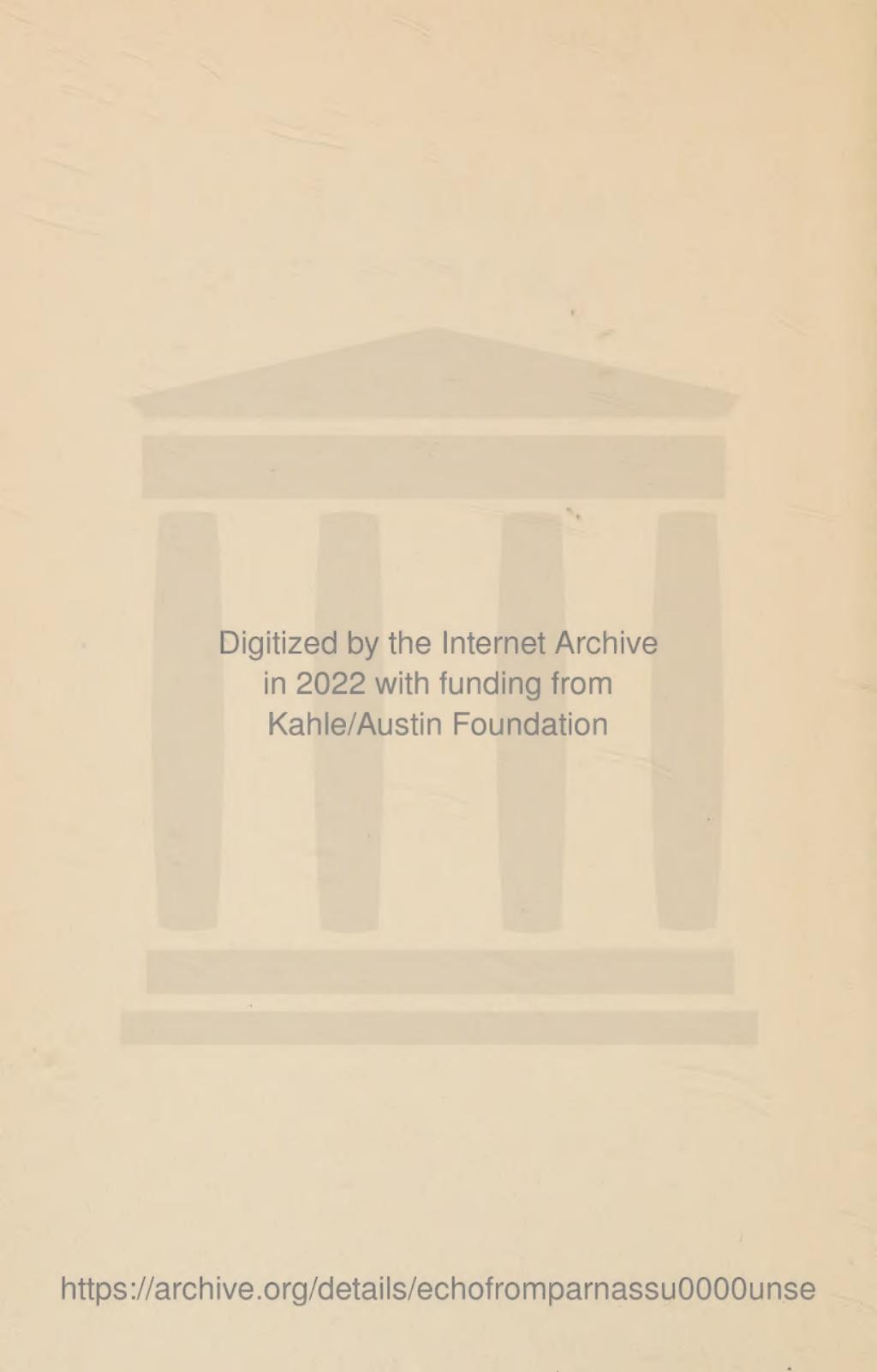
HENRIETTA DANA SKINNER

WITHDRAWN  
BATES COLLEGE LIBRARY  
LEWISTON, MAINE  
PRESENTED BY  
CHARLES F. ADAMS  
LIBRARY STORAGE

2.00  
19¢



*An ECHO from*  
PARNASSUS



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/echofromparnassu0000unse>

# An ECHO from PARNASSUS

# Being Girlhood Memories of Longfellow and His Friends

By Henrietta Dana Skinner



J. H. Sears & Company, Inc.  
Publishers New York

134396

AN ECHO FROM PARNASSUS

---

COPYRIGHT, 1928, BY

J. H. SEARS & CO., INCORPORATED

---

---

MANUFACTURED COMPLETE BY THE  
KINGSPORT PRESS  
KINGSPORT, TENNESSEE  
*United States of America*

---

This Book  
Is Lovingly Dedicated  
to  
My Three Granddaughters



## PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

This book—completed a few weeks before the death of its author—was written only after considerable persuasion. “No one is interested in the memories of an old lady of seventy,” Mrs. Skinner said when the idea was first suggested to her. “Why should I set out to burden people who are already surfeited with autobiographies and reminiscences?”

To overcome her natural unwillingness to write about herself, it was necessary to point out to Mrs. Skinner the almost unique position which she occupied among present-day writers. Not only was she the author of four distinguished novels and many short stories, articles and critical reviews, but as the daughter of Richard Henry Dana, the famous author of “Two Years Before the Mast,” the granddaughter of one of the founders of the *North American Review*, and as the youngest member of a family whose home during and just after the Civil War was a center for many of the greatest literary and political figures of that day, her youth was crowded with vivid and often glamorous experiences. Hardly

## Publisher's Foreword

any other living writer of established reputation was in a position to re-create, as through the eyes of a child, that particular period of American life and the men who dominated it.

As a young child, she shared the studies of the children of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, going to school daily in the Craigie House under the Longfellows' English governess. No other American writer, living or dead, had enjoyed that particular privilege of knowing so intimately the home life of this distinguished scholar and poet. A few years later, she became a pupil in the Artists' School of the Royal Conservatory of Stuttgart, immediately after the Franco-Prussian War, and while the minor principalities of Germany were still groaning under the iron discipline and exactions of Prussia. And from there she went to Paris, to study in the same Convent and class with the little Orléans princess, Mercédès, who was soon to become Queen of Spain. At this Convent, too, she continued her music lessons under no less distinguished a teacher than the great composer, organist and pianist, César Franck. Who, then, could write with more authority and keen personal interest of the atmosphere and personalities surrounding a child in that much-maligned day now labeled "Victorian"?

Considerations such as these finally persuaded

## Publisher's Foreword

Mrs. Skinner to abandon her natural reticence, and to present not only for the grown-ups of to-day, but for the children in school studying the history and writings of that unique Cambridge and Boston circle, an intimate, informal and exceedingly human picture of the men and ideas and environment that formed its distinctive charm.

As there might be some natural curiosity to know just what a youth of this sort brought to the author's later years, and how it shaped her views of the much-changed modern world, a concluding chapter, written by her son, has been added to this book.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD . . . . .	vii
I. FIGURES OF STRAW . . . . .	1
II. FIRST MEMORIES OF THE LONG-FELLOWS . . . . .	8
III. THE POETRY SCHOOL . . . . .	18
IV. WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY, 1864 . .	36
V. "TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST," AND LATER . . . . .	56
VI. REAL VICTORIANS AT SCHOOL . .	83
VII. "DOORS LEFT UNGUARDED" . .	112
VIII. THE CASE OF ANTHONY BURNS	
1. THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW . .	131
2. THE RENDITION OF ANTHONY BURNS . . . . .	155
IX. PIGMIES AND GIANTS . . . . .	171
X. LINCOLN—GIANT OF GIANTS . .	199
XI. MUSIC—AND ITS MASTERS . .	208
XII. A PIGMY LOOKS AT A QUEEN . .	221
XIII. THERE ARE STILL PIGMIES AND GIANTS . . . . .	260
"A BROKEN MOLD," BY THE SON OF THE AUTHOR, R. DANA SKIN- NER . . . . .	263



# AN ECHO FROM PARNASSUS

## CHAPTER I

### FIGURES OF STRAW

**V**ICTORIANS! What a cloud of legend that word summons before the younger people of to-day. These men—and women, too—who shaped our culture and our national destinies during the searing days of the Civil War (including both the earlier anti-slavery struggle and the years of Reconstruction), these men stand before many to-day as stiff shadows of a hollow greatness. To me, born in the very heart of the Victorian Era, 1857, growing up through the Golden Age of New England, they never can be mere shadows. For I saw them as men, as the intimate friends of my father

## An Echo from Parnassus

and mother in our Cambridge home, or of my grandfather Dana and his circle in Boston. I saw them familiarly by our own fire-sides, or pleasantly at ease in the fine library of the poet Longfellow's house—almost a second home to me in my childhood, where, during many of those early years, I shared the studies and the pastimes of Mr. Longfellow's younger children.

There we ran about beneath the feet of many of the most famous men of the day, listening eagerly to their informal talk and childishly absorbing an atmosphere that was surely never known before in America, and certainly never can be known again.

Growing up in such environment, poets and authors, scientists and statesmen seemed to us children quite natural, everyday people. They were as thick as blackberries in our little world. We did not know that they were exceptional. They were not held up to us as heroes or idols. We, as little pygmies on the Victorian Parnassus, saw them only as familiar, friendly figures, who always had

## Figures of Straw

most interesting things to talk about. We saw them as men of flesh and blood—of keen wit and flashing humor, like James Russell Lowell, poet, essayist and diplomat, or Oliver Wendell Holmes, distinguished both as scientist and as poet; or, men of sternly serious purpose, lightened by much personal charm and fine literary tastes, like the great Abolitionist leader, Charles Sumner; or again, men of exuberant fun, like the famous naturalist, Louis Agassiz, and the brilliant publisher and critic, James T. Fields; or it might be the romantic figure of that knight-errant of oppressed and suffering humanity, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, and his even more famous wife, Julia Ward Howe. These and many others we knew as only a child can know older people—with intuition, a shade of awe, and an eager curiosity.

Small wonder, then, that I frequently bristle when the critics and writers of a younger generation, who can have no personal knowledge of these men or of the age they lived in, hold up before us curious

## An Echo from Parnassus

figures of their own devising which they label “Victorians” and endow with characteristics which they like to attribute to “Puritanism” and “Victorianism”—figures of straw, which, as I can testify vigorously, bear little if any resemblance to the living figures of my youthful memories.

It is not that I resent the criticisms that are passed on the written works or on the public actions of another age. They arise from differences of taste, of points of view, or simple lack of sufficient information. Heaven knows that these older men were in their own lifetime the targets of many hotly barbed arrows, were subjects of controversy and lively discussions, of much misunderstanding and hearty abuse. This is apt to be the lot of all outstanding figures in times of crises, or of extraordinary activity—literary, scientific or political. But when critics, barred by youth or lack of opportunity from personal knowledge of their subject or familiarity with his environment, undertake to draw pictures of his social characteristics,

## Figures of Straw

and to pronounce judgment on his intimate thoughts, habits and manner of life, the result is apt to be either unrecognizable or a mere caricature. Even an intentional caricature should bear an unmistakable resemblance to its subject, or it has no point.

From these figures of straw, so irritating because so unrecognizable even with their labels, it is a relief to browse for a while among early memories, and to try to call up the sturdy features of those men and women, and children, too, the true Victorians of New England's Golden Age.

I hope I am not quite blind to amusing idiosyncrasies, whether found among Victorians—or moderns. Not every memory of any age is free from an occasional sly chuckle. But at least I knew our Victorians in three dimensions, profile as well as full-face or coat-tail view, and if one figure was bay-windowed or one was bow-legged, or another had, like Dr. Holmes, a turned-up nose, I could also see their God-given compensations. I shall simply try to describe

## An Echo from Parnassus

them as we children saw them in our every-day life—just our parents and relatives and their intimate friends, living beside us, coming and going in what seemed to us young people the quiet, shady streets of pleasant, provincial towns called Old Cambridge and Boston, but which, we came to know later, were, in reality, the footpaths of Parnassus.

Literally footpaths! For those were not days when lifelong friends could pass each other unwittingly—and painfully—in subway trains or flash by in gleaming motor cars. To meet a friend meant to talk with him—whether he bored you or buoyed you. You had to know people, for better or worse. Thus any day on a Cambridge street, science, law and poetry might meet with wit and fine arts—as in this word picture by Mr. Longfellow of an afternoon stroll, during which he met my father, my grandfather and others:

“Walking in the pleasant sunset,” he writes, “I met Richard Dana [author of the romance of the sea ‘Two Years Before the Mast’] and shortly afterwards his father,

## Figures of Straw

the aged essayist and author,—a courteous gentleman who has somewhat outlived his fame, and to whom the present generation does not pay the honor that is his due. We had some pleasant chats about the British essayists and the charm that still lingers round their memory. As we walked we met James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton, and I felt that we belonged to the ‘old guard.’ ”

This was in 1862—when I was five years old. My then “aged” grandfather lived on for another seventeen years, dying only two years before Mr. Longfellow himself! But I think it was part of the spirit of those days that many generations could, by the grace of their common interests and alert minds, utterly bridge the years. Gray hairs and dark were not so far apart as they pretend to be to-day—perhaps because the older men were younger in their hearts—but surely, too, because the younger were not old before their years. The footpaths of Parnassus did lead, I am convinced, in some singular way, to a region of perpetual youth.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST MEMORIES OF THE LONGFELLOWS

“A child  
That lightly draws its breath  
And feels its life in every limb,  
What should it know of Death?”

—WORDSWORTH.

AT four years of age one has not a continuing memory of events, but certain pictures, certain scenes flash out from the past as we look back through the years. One of the most vivid, though not the earliest of my childish recollections, is of a warm summer's day in our home at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in July, 1861, when my mother took me quietly aside and said to me:

“The little Longfellow girls are coming over to-day to stay with us for a while, and I want you to be very good and play nicely

## First Memories of the Longfellows

with them. We must try and make Edie and Annie as happy as we can, for their mamma is away, and we want to keep them from feeling lonely or homesick."

I was only four years and four months old, and I cannot recall that anyone had spoken to me of Mrs. Longfellow, yet when Mother said, "Their mamma is away," I knew she meant that she was dead! Not that this troubled me at all. Death only meant that one turned into an angel and went to live with God in a Paradise shining and beautiful beyond dreams. But of course, Edie and Annie would miss their mother and I could understand that it would be best not to talk to them about her. That Mrs. Longfellow's death was a tragedy I was not to know in all its attendant heart-break till somewhat later in life, when little by little I learned the following details from my elders.

About a year prior to this summer, the poet had written a pretty sketch of his three little girls to a youthful friend:

## An Echo from Parnassus

“The eldest is about your age, but as little girls’ ages keep changing every year I can never remember exactly how old she is. Her name is Alice. I never forget that. She is a nice girl and loves poetry almost as much as you do. The second is Edith, with blue eyes and beautiful golden locks which I sometimes call her ‘nankeen hair’ to make her laugh. She is a very busy little woman and wears gray boots. The youngest is Allegra, which you know means merry, and she is the merriest little thing you ever saw, always singing and laughing all over the house.”

But in 1861, on the 9th day of July, the daughter Alice, as well as the sons, Charles Appleton and Ernest Wadsworth, tall lads in their teens, were not at home. They were visiting relatives in Portland and Nahant. For Cambridge lies low, and, in spite of “the elmy quiet of its shaded streets,” all who can do so leave it for the seashore or the hills as soon as the Harvard College “Commencement” and “Class Day” are over. So Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow were alone with the two youngest children and three maids in the

## First Memories of the Longfellows

beautiful old colonial mansion in Brattle Street known as "Craigie House." Standing on a slight elevation in grounds of eight or ten acres in extent, shaded by towering elms and looking across open fields to the valley of the winding Charles River, Craigie House caught all such breezes as might be blowing, and the unusual thickness of its solid brick walls\* retained an even temperature within. Yet even here it had become unusually warm, and the parents sadly decided to sacrifice the little Edith's lovely golden curls for the child's greater comfort.

So, on this 9th day of July, the "nankeen hair" was cut short, and Mrs. Longfellow sat with the two little girls in the large cool library, thinking to amuse them with making packages of the curls to send to relatives. Paper, a candle, matches, wax and seals were spread out on the long, carved Italian center table, and the first package,—addressed to her sister, Lady Mackintosh, in London—

\* Note: Craigie House appears to be built of wood, but in reality is built of brick with only an outside veneer of wood.

## An Echo from Parnassus

was duly done up and sealed. Then—a burning match fell to the floor, and Mrs. Longfellow's dress accidentally brushed over it. Before the details of the ensuing tragedy, we may well leave the veil of privacy. This was before the days of telephones or of swift-moving vehicles. The family physician, Dr. Morrill Wyman, was out of town; a second doctor summoned was also away; half the houses in Brattle Street were closed, their occupants in the country.

The first to arrive with help was a stranger, Dr. William Otis Johnson. He it was who administered first aid to the still unconscious victim, as well as to the sorely stricken husband who had heroically tried to save her and was himself severely burned. In after years I came to know Dr. Johnson's widow. As she described the scene to me, Mrs. Longfellow lay calm and beautiful as if in sleep, her face unmarred by the flames, and wearing an expression so spiritual, so far removed from this world of suffering, that the physician in ministering to her felt a hushed reverence

## First Memories of the Longfellows

as if in the presence of a martyred saint.

At the time of the accident my mother, Mrs. Dana, was not at home. We were near neighbors of the Longfellows, and a friendship of many years' standing existed between the families; while Mrs. Longfellow and my mother, whose children were nearly of an age, had many confidential visits and talks over their household problems. When Mother returned home, late on the evening of the accident, she at once went over to Craigie House. But all that could be done was already done, and there were now loving hands in abundance to help. The children were asleep in a distant part of the house. Mr. Longfellow, both hands bandaged to the elbows, led my mother to the bedroom where the sufferer lay in apparent unconsciousness—still, in calm and unearthly beauty. As they stood by her bedside, they saw a smile pass over her lips, the eyes half-opened and she murmured softly but distinctly, "It is raining."

## An Echo from Parnassus

They listened, and sure enough, the soft summer rain had begun to patter on the roof of the piazza underneath her windows. But as her husband bent over her, hoping for another word, her eyes closed again and she sank back into the coma in which she lay all through the night. In the morning the heart failed and her spirit passed away. As far as we know, that was her only moment of speech and consciousness.

Mr. Longfellow had said to my mother, "There is one thing, Mrs. Dana, that you can do for me. Take my two little girls and keep them with you and your children till all is over. I do not know how much they may have seen or understood, but I hope to keep them from having any association of sadness or fear with their mother. So, if possible, let them merely think that she is away, that she bade them good-by while they slept."

So the two little girls came to us that July morning—Annie Allegra, five and a half years old, and Edith, seven and a half. The older children, the daughter Alice and the

## First Memories of the Longfellows

two sons, fifteen and seventeen years of age, remained with their father.

I have scant memory of the children's visit, though I recall that we took them at once to our garden to see the flowers, the swing and other objects of interest. My older sisters had taken the little girls by the hand to show them about, and I trudged behind, conscious that there was some mystery, some secret about their being with us, and that I must be very quiet and good. To me, at four and a quarter, they seemed quite grown-up, self-possessed little women of the world, Edith bright and talkative, Annie rather serious-eyed and reserved. How astonished I should have been if told that the golden-haired Edith would one day be my sister, my brother Richard's wife! I watched their every movement with fascinated eyes—two short-haired little girls, one brown and one very fair, dressed alike in low-neck, short-sleeved white frocks, with long pantalottes, short white socks and black kid ankle-ties. Those ankle-ties made a very deep im-

## An Echo from Parnassus

pression on me, and my poor mother knew no rest until she promised to get me a pair.

So unconnected are cause and effect in the mind of childhood that, three days after Mrs. Longfellow's tragic death, my mother, coming home from the burial, ran up to our nursery to see if Edie and Annie were well and happy, and on opening the door, was half-paralyzed with fright and amazement to see the children sitting on the hearth, *playing with matches!*

Frances Appleton Longfellow's burial had taken place at beautiful Mt. Auburn cemetery, the fourth day after the tragedy. It was the anniversary of her wedding day. A wreath of orange-blossoms had been placed upon her brown hair, and her lovely face, untouched by flame or any marks of long suffering, lay calm and fair beneath, unforgettable to all who looked upon it. Her husband was not there. The painful burns he had received, the shock of tragedy and loss had prostrated him, and he was confined for many days to the chamber which for twenty

## First Memories of the Longfellows

years to come was to be a sacred shrine, a retreat for his spirit's lonely wrestlings.

It was not till eighteen years later that the poet could write of this, and then not for publication :

“In the long sleepless watches of the night  
A gentle face, the face of one long dead,  
Looks at me from the wall, where round its head  
The night-lamp casts a halo of pale light.  
Here in this room she died ; and soul more white  
Never through martyrdom of fire was led  
To its repose ; nor can in books be read  
The legend of a life more benedight.”

## CHAPTER III

### THE POETRY SCHOOL

**I**LITTLE knew at the time of Mrs. Longfellow's death how closely this tragic event would link the rest of my childhood with Mr. Longfellow and his daughters—that not only would my brother marry Edith of the golden hair, but five years of my early schooling take place in the Longfellow home.

This new intimacy, however, did not come at once. But the little school in Craigie House would probably never have been started had the children not been left motherless. In the immediate dark days following the tragedy, the poet was more than content merely to draw inspiration and comfort from his children.

Thus, in January, 1862, about six months after his wife's death, he writes:

## The Poetry School

“I cannot speak of the desolation, the sorrow which overwhelms and crushes me. I must be patient and silent. The winter days creep along. Reading,—newspapers [the Civil War was then raging], Calderon, Michael Angelo’s Sonnets, Fioretti di San Francesco, letters, talks with friends, walks through the snow—so, one after another, the heavy days are rolled over the horizon and disappear in the abyss. But my children are well and good, and that is a great comfort to me. . . . What a beautiful world the child’s world is! So instinct with life, so illuminated with imagination. I take infinite delight in seeing it go on around me.”

Not only were the three little girls the inspiration of the most popular and widely known of his more intimate poems—“The Children’s Hour”—but a few days after this sad, soul-weary entry in his journal, another inspiration comes, this time from one of his sons:

“Feb. 3, 1862. In the evening read Dante’s Purgatory with the three older children.

## An Echo from Parnassus

Charles has taken up this idea from attending Lowell's lectures in college."

And this happy idea of the eighteen-year-old lad seems to have restored to Mr. Longfellow his native zest for work. In that same month he writes:

"I have translated the beautiful Canto XXV of the *Paradiso*." [And again:] "Have now completed twelve Cantos of *Paradiso*."

This was the beginning of his great work, the translation of the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, and the weekly sessions of the famous "Dante Club."

In the following autumn comes another entry of interest:

"Oct. 11, 1862. This day wrote a little upon 'The Wayside Inn'—a beginning only."

His zest for work, always unusual, now rekindled, was unflagging, and in November,

## The Poetry School

1863, the Boston publishing house of Ticknor and Fields—now the Houghton Mifflin Company—brought out, complete in one volume, “The Tales of a Wayside Inn,” with “The Children’s Hour and Other Poems,” in a first printing of 15,000 copies. Its enormous popularity and phenomenal sale induced Mr. Longfellow to consent to the reproduction of the charming portrait of his three little girls, who had been painted in one group by T. Buchanan Read in June, 1859.

Ordinarily a portrait does not create false history. But this one did—which is my reason for telling about it here. A legend grew up about it overnight, due probably to our sentimental American habit of liking to exaggerate the tragedies of the great, but as annoying to the Longfellow family as it was amusing. The legend had it—and may still have it, for all I know—that one of the poet’s daughters had no arms, that this was the second and secret tragedy of his life. And this is how the astonishing legend started:

## An Echo from Parnassus

Read's portrait was photographed by a well-known art store and sold all over the country under the title of "The Morning Glories," finding its way to thousands of homes where "grave Alice and laughing Allegra, and Edith with golden hair" quickly became household favorites. Now the artist had taken infinite pains, in grouping the children for the picture, to have them look happy and natural. "I cannot paint you," he told them, "standing in a stiff row with your six arms hanging straight down by your sides. You must get close together and twine your arms lovingly about each other so that they will be partially concealed." The result as seen in the picture, which still hangs on the white paneled walls of the Craigie House dining room, was a lovely vision of fresh, spontaneous childish affection.

But the cruel rumor, as false as it was distressing, grew that the children had been so posed to conceal the fact that the youngest little one had no arms! It was one of those hydra-headed lies that it seems impossible to

## The Poetry School

stamp out entirely from existence. The English artist Leslie told my father of just such an instance in England, where the rumor flourished that Queen Victoria's oldest child, the Princess Royal (afterwards the Empress Frederick of Germany), was blind. Mr. Leslie, who had painted her portrait and spent many days in her presence, assured all he met that she was an unusually bright-eyed and observing child, but as often as not his assurances were received with sheer, obstinate incredulity.

In the meantime, the event came to pass which brought me at last into the heart of the Longfellow household. Mr. Longfellow had come to feel that though the little girls had outgrown a nurse's care, they still were too young to be without some sort of womanly supervision. The natural solution of the problem was—a governess, and Mrs. Longfellow's sister, Lady Mackintosh (Mary Appleton), who had brought up her own daughter in the English way, suggested for the position the former governess of Eva Mack-

## An Echo from Parnassus

intosh, who had now outgrown the school-room. So Miss Hannah Davie, of Lyme Regis, Devonshire, daughter of a Church of England clergyman, came over to instruct the poet's little girls after the good old methods of the English governess trained in the schools of Miss Hannah More, Miss Harriet Martineau and the Misses Sewell.

And judging from the experience of five years in which I shared their studies, very jolly and inspiring methods they were. I can only write of them, however, from my own point of view, because the methods seem in some instances to have reacted differently on other dispositions and ages.

To keep his little daughters company, Mr. Longfellow invited three or four children of friends and neighbors to come over daily and share the children's studies and pastimes, and I was one of those invited. Our parents remunerated Miss Davie directly for the teaching, and all the practical details of our schooling and conduct were settled with her. In this way, Mr. Longfellow had no respon-

## The Poetry School

sibility for the school, the parents were under no obligation to him beyond the friendly courtesy of an offered opportunity, while Miss Davie's position was one of independent authority and dignity.

I have called it "the poetry school," because it was in the house of a poet, because we lived in an atmosphere of poetry and saw the birth of many of the beloved poet's best-known works, saw other poets and writers, his friends and advisers, coming back and forth to discuss with him the greatest poetical work of all time, the "Divine Comedy" of Dante. But I also call it so because many of us children were ourselves descended from or related to poets. In fact, poetry and poets formed so large a part of our school tradition that we took them very much for granted. If anyone had said to me, "Is not your grandfather a poet?" I should probably have replied, "Why, yes. Isn't yours?" The Longfellow children even made jokes about poetry, in which their father and their uncle, Rev. Samuel Longfellow, a writer of very lovely

## An Echo from Parnassus

verses and hymns, aided and abetted them. A favorite breakfast dish of the family was battercakes baked in cups which puffed out in the baking till they were mostly crust and little inside. These were generally known as "popovers," but the Longfellow children called them "poetry cakes"—"because," they explained, with great gusto, "*there's nothing in them!*" and this joke their father relished hugely.

Still, although I have called our little school at Craigie House "the poetry school," I really think that I, personally, owe far more of my childish associations with poetry to my grandfather Dana and more especially to my father. It was Father who threw a glamour, an atmosphere of romance and idealism over the poems or fragments of poetry that he loved to recite to his children, pacing up and down the floor of his study, or of the living room. It had been thus that, in his youth, during his "two years before the mast," he had kept alive the finer things of the spirit amid the rough and brutalizing as-

## The Poetry School

sociations of the forecastle and of the hide-houses of the California beaches. It was thus that he had paced the night watches on the little 180 ton brig *Pilgrim* as she tossed her puny way round Cape Horn and up along the western stretches of the Pacific slope of South America. It was thus that he kept the fires of hope and idealism burning through the dark and desperate hours of the *Alert's* stormy home-bound voyage.

I had learned early—at about six or seven years of age—that, in the quiet hour after a six o'clock dinner and before he retired to his study to work on his law cases and problems of the next day, if I saw Father rise and begin to pace the floor slowly, then I might thrust my little hand in his and trot by his side, two steps to his one, and in a moment he would begin in his rich, low voice to half-chant, half-declaim, usually Coleridge's "Christabel"—" 'Twas the middle of night by the castle clock," describing the howling of the old toothless mastiff—

## An Echo from Parnassus

“Four for the quarter and twelve for the hour,  
Sixteen short howls not over loud,—  
Some say she sees my Lady’s shroud!”

This was nice and creepy, and then came the tolling of the chapel bell, and its echoes from the hills around.

“In Dungeon Ghyll so foully rent,  
Three sinful sextons’ ghosts are pent.  
With ropes of rock and bells of air  
They must give back one after t’other  
The death-knell to their living brother.”

The “Ancient Mariner” perhaps followed next, with perfectly scrumptious words that one didn’t hear every day, like “eftsoons.” I loved the albatross, and my eyes always filled when it came to the words

“. . . with my cross-bow  
I shot the albatross.”

I knew it was inevitable, and yet there was always a sneaking hope that some day it would be different and the albatross would live!

## The Poetry School

From Coleridge, Father would perhaps turn to Tennyson with the "Lady of Shalott," the "Lotus Eaters," or

"The splendor falls on castle walls,  
And snowy summits old in story  
The long light shakes across the lakes  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory."

Father was very independent in his choice of poems. What was idealistic or romantic, what was nobly expressed or finely aimed appealed to him. Much else was passed by. He had a poor opinion of part of Tennyson's work, while other parts stirred him to the depths.

From Tennyson he would drift to Scott, "Pibroch of Donal Dhu," the exquisite descriptions from "The Last Minstrel," or "Lady of the Lake," the stirring strains of "Marmion." Then, as fancy led him, he would ramble here and there in Byron's "Childe Harold," or it might be Shelley's "Skylark."

That the child by his side could not be

## An Echo from Parnassus

expected to follow the thought, could only glimpse it—afar,—did not disturb him. He had faith in and respect for the dreams, the imagination of childhood—the childhood of which Wordsworth wrote, “Heaven lies about us in our infancy.” So, too, would poetry cast its radiance over the youthful imagination, and the eyes of the young would learn to look Upward, the ears of the child to listen for sounds from Beyond.

Sometimes there were merrier moods, when we would go galloping off with Tam o’ Shanter and his gray mare Meg, or dash to the burning of Drury Lane Theater with James and Horace Smith in their brilliant parodies “The Rejected Addresses.” Then, again, he would chant the old songs of the sea—sentimental or religious ones of Italian sailors, “O Pescator dell’ onda, Fidelin,” and “Ave, Sanctissima,” or the early English chanteys, “Give the wind time to blow the man down,” “John France War” (Jean-François), and other favorites of the fore-  
castle. If things were going very well, he

## The Poetry School

might even show me some of the step-dances and hornpipes that the sailors pattered out barefoot on the decks. I do not recall ever hearing my father speak of the sea-songs as "chanseys," though that is now the accepted name for the songs "deaconed" out as the men pull rhythmically at the ropes.

We were then scarce seven years removed from the days of the Crimean War and the great Indian Mutiny—"Annie Laurie" was the song inalienably associated with the former, and, with the other, the strain of the Highland bagpipes playing "The Campbells Are Coming," as they marched to the relief of Lucknow—sounds mysteriously borne on the air to the besieged sixty miles away! Father, who had taken a trip round the world in 1859-60, touching at the English possessions in the Orient, was full of tales of those terrible days, and I can still feel the cold shudders rush up and down my spine when I recall his recital of some of the events as he heard them from the lips of the British officers concerned.

## An Echo from Parnassus

We were in the midst of our own Civil War, but its songs developed slowly. "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," sung to the tune of "John Brown's Body Lies A-mouldering in the Grave, But His Soul Goes Marching On," was the one song on everybody's lips at the first and it remained the most popular song of the North. New words were constantly being adapted to it, from the vulgar ones "We'll Hang Jeff Davis to a Sour Apple Tree," to the lofty words of Mrs. Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic"—a little too lofty for general appeal and comprehension. Strangely enough, two songs extremely popular in the North—though of course not sung officially—were the spirited, catchy old music-hall song of "Dixie," and the German air of "Tannenbaum, mein Tannenbaum" adopted by the South as "Maryland, My Maryland," and in the North parodied in these words:

"Stonewall's heels were on the shore  
Of Maryland, my Maryland;  
He had his eye on Baltimore  
In Maryland, my Maryland;

## The Poetry School

But when he heard the cannon roar  
He crossed to old Virginia shore,  
And vowed he would return no more  
To Maryland, my Maryland."

This parody, and Mrs. Howe's "Battle Hymn" were the only songs of the war that I can recall hearing my father sing. The war affected him too deeply. In the critical days of Gettysburg he was almost ill with anxiety, and I was not permitted to run about the house, but hushed and kept at quiet occupations in a distant room. It was the life or death crisis of the country's illness, and we scarcely breathed till it was past.

At this same time, when my father filled me with poetry, as so few fathers of to-day could or would do, my grandfather, the earliest of that group of pioneer poets of America at the opening of the 19th century, and whose poetry was given by the critics of his day a higher place than Poe's—seemed unable to impart his feeling to us children. While we were very little he was wonderful, his store of fairy tales and Mother Goose

## An Echo from Parnassus

rimes seemed inexhaustible and we hung about him fascinated, as he recited "The Frog He Would A-wooing Go," "Who Killed Cock Robin," the "Pig That Wouldn't Go," and later the ballads of "John Gilpin" or "Goody Blanke and Harry Gill." It was he who first taught me to say George Herbert's exquisite

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright—  
The bridal of the earth and sky"

and Bryant's "Robert of Lincoln." But at the intermediate age he seemed to feel lost with us, until we grew old enough for Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth. In a way he had less faith than my father in the instinctive understanding of childhood.

But poetry surrounded us everywhere. We accepted it as naturally as the modern child accepts the movies! And who shall say that we suffered from not knowing the wonders of the silver screen?

It may yet be through this same silver screen that the old poets will live again in

## The Poetry School

the hearts of the younger generations. For their great-grandchildren four generations later have seen recently an exquisite little film in colors, being flashed before the million visitors of the Loew's Vaudeville Circuit all over the United States, illustrating a dainty poem by the "courteous old gentleman"—the octogenarian Dana—referred to by Mr. Longfellow when, sixty-five years ago, they discussed the writers of a still earlier century—a pretty sketch in blues and whites called "The Pleasure Boat"—the deep blue of the sea with its white-capped wavelets, the white wings of the gulls flashing against a sky of lighter blue, while, white-sailed and sun-lit,

"The boat goes tilting o'er the waves,  
The waves go tilting by."

## CHAPTER IV

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY, 1864

OUR schoolroom at Craigie House was the large, front, southeast corner room, in the second story directly over Mr. Longfellow's study. It had been the bedchamber of General Washington when he was in Cambridge in 1775, and the study below had been his office.

My coming into the school in the winter of 1863-4 had been made much of, because I had the good fortune to have been born on Washington's birthday, February 22nd, and it seemed quite appropriate and natural that I should come to his house to be educated. I had the additional good fortune to have escaped being named either Georgiana or Martha Washington, through the kind offices of Mrs. Edward Channing, a cousin of

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

my father, and my mother's most intimate friend. She was Henrietta Ellery, granddaughter of William Ellery of Rhode Island, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, and had married her cousin, Edward Tyrrel Channing, a nephew of the Signer, and for forty years professor of English at Harvard, under whom my father had studied when in college. Prof. Channing was one of a remarkable family, the brother of Rev. William Ellery Channing, "the Divine," founder of New England Unitarianism, and of the elder Dr. Walter Channing, a leading physician of Boston, and of the distinguished lawyer, Francis Dana Channing. My great-grandmother, wife of Chief Justice Francis Dana of Massachusetts, had been Elizabeth Ellery, a daughter of the Signer. In fact, the Ellery ladies seem to have had rather a habit of marrying into the Channing, Dana, and Sedgwick families, and when Professor Channing died, his successor in the Chair of English Literature at Harvard was Francis Child, who married Elizabeth Ellery Sedg-

## An Echo from Parnassus

wick of Stockbridge, an aunt of Ellery Sedgwick, present editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

All this genealogical "aside" is rather complicated and perhaps uncalled for, except that it explains why, when I was born on Washington's Birthday and had an aunt—Martha Remington Dana married to the artist Washington Allston, I nevertheless escaped the obvious "Martha Washington" and was named, like several other Ellery descendants, for Mrs. Henrietta Channing, popularly known and loved in our family circles as "Aunt Ritty."

Now at "Elmwood" in Cambridge, the scene of Longfellow's poem, lived a distinguished poet, essayist and Harvard Professor of Literature, who, many years before my day, had also been born on February 22nd, and thereby hangs the following little tale.

James Russell Lowell's name was known throughout the country both for his beautiful poem, "Vision of Sir Launfal," and for his humorous political "Biglow Papers."

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

He and my father had been friends from their schoolboy days. He was an especially warm friend of Mr. Longfellow, and I saw him frequently, both at our house and at Craigie House. He and my father, when they met, greeted each other warmly, but after the English fashion of the day, as "Lowell" and "Dana." But in a few minutes they would be laughing and joking together and it had become "Jim" and "Dick." Before long we would hear uproarious shouts of laughter over some escapade of their childhood and now it was "Jimmy" and "Dicky." To me it seemed very queer that two such aged and bearded gentlemen (they were respectively forty-eight and forty-five years old) should be so silly. Then Mr. Lowell had a way that I hated, of stopping and patting me on the head and asking me to tell him the names of the Nine Muses in Greek, and to say off all the Kings of England since Egbert, after which he would turn to whoever was with him and say, "And she is not yet seven years old." Stupid and unnecessary

## An Echo from Parnassus

questions, they seemed to me, for of course Mr. Lowell knew the answers himself perfectly well, and what had my not yet being seven to do with Kings and Muses, anyhow? But one never knew what grown-up people were going to do or say. They did things for queer reasons that seemed to children to have no sense at all. So I did not enjoy Mr. Lowell as much as my elders did, who considered him the best company in the world.

But then I was rather a shy child, even with good, kind Mr. Longfellow, who always had cheery little jokes with us children, and made up funny rimes and limericks for us. One of these absurd verses became widely known, and is so still—written for his “little Saxon Edith.”

“There was a little girl, and she had a little curl  
Right in the middle of her forehead,  
And when she was good, she was very, very good  
And when she was bad she was horrid!”

I remember one day, the eve of my seventh birthday, walking home from Harvard

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

Square where I had been sent on an “errand”—that bane of a telephone-less childhood. The walking was execrable that warm winter’s morning,—the sidewalks impassable with slush, everyone plowing through the car tracks, themselves rivers of melted snow. I was having a glorious time splashing through it all in my “rubber boots” when, from a cross street, Mr. Longfellow suddenly appeared and came walking directly toward me. My first thought was instant flight, and I looked round wildly for an avenue of escape, but it was too late. As the old song says of the lady who had jilted her lover, “He came, I could not breathe, for his eye was upon me.”

But it was a merry eye, and he took me by the hand and said we would wade home and sink or swim together. And wasn’t I lucky, he added, to live in the days of rubber boots, so that I could splash fearlessly through snow and mud? When he was a boy there were no rubber boots, no galoshes, no water-proof coats to play about in. Did

## An Echo from Parnassus

I know what they had to wear in those far-off days?

No, I had never thought. What did they wear?

Well, the boys and men were not so badly off because they could wear high leather boots pulled up over their trousers and well greased to keep out the wet. But the ladies had only pattens and clogs, which were very hard to walk in and no good at all in deep mud or snow.

“Oh, those are the things that Caroline wouldn’t wear,” I interrupted, “because she was so vain and wanted to show off her new pink slippers. Will you please tell me what they looked like?”

“But who is Caroline?” asked Mr. Longfellow.

“Why she is one of the stories in ‘Looking-glass for the Mind,’ ” I explained. “They asked her what she would like for a birthday present and she chose a pink silk slip and pink satin shoes, and insisted on wearing them to the picnic, when the other children were

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

dressed in brown holland and wore clogs. Then there came up a rainstorm, and Caroline's frock and slippers were ruined and she was properly punished for her vanity. Please, what is the difference between clogs and pattens?"

"Pattens," he explained, "were a sort of wooden sandal with a strap over the instep, and a high heel at each end of the sole to raise the foot above the mud, like little stilts. When the ladies went walking in bad weather they thrust their slippered feet into pattens, and when entering the house, slid off the wet pattens and left them on the doormat. Clogs, too, had wooden soles, but no heels, and they had leather or wooden sides and tops, like French children's *sabots*."

"Oh, I know about sabots," I cried. "'Le petit Savoyard' wears them in one of the stories in Berquin's 'Ami de l'Enfance.'"

"And now," said Mr. Longfellow, "suppose you tell me some of the other stories in 'Looking-glass for the Mind.'"

Now these were sensible questions to ask,

## An Echo from Parnassus

because one could see that Mr. Longfellow really didn't know and would like to hear about them. So nothing loath, I sketched some of my favorites, and again he had questions to ask me.

Did I know why the little boys in these stories had names like Augustus and Adolphus and Frederick, instead of Harry and Frank and Jack, like boys of to-day? Well, it was because the stories were written in England when George III was King, and, as you know, he was King of Hanover in Germany as well, and liked everything German. So he gave his children German names, and everybody who wanted to be in the fashion thought they must do the same.

“And to-day,” went on Mr. Longfellow, “because the Queen's name is Alexandrina Victoria and her husband is Prince Albert, hundreds of little boys are being named Victor or Albert, and little girls called Victoria or Albertine or Alexandra. Now, in ‘Looking-glass,’ fashionable young ladies were probably called Augusta and Frederica and

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

Caroline, while only farmers' daughters have names like Betty and Nancy and Polly."

"There's one Nancy that is half-way between," I explained, "neither rich nor poor. That is the story of Nancy and her canary-bird, Poor Cherry. She is having a good time with her playmates and forgets to feed him and he dies of hunger."

"Poor Cherry indeed! Do you know why she called him so?"

"I've often wondered! Because a canary isn't red. But perhaps English cherries are yellow?"

"The name has nothing to do with cherries," he told me. "It is the way English people, not accustomed to French, pronounce the word 'Chéri,' which you know means darling, or pet, or anything one loves dearly. Nearly all our fairy stories and children's tales come to us through the French, so the Prince who wakes the 'Belle au Bois Dormant,' or the Prince who dances with 'Cendrillon,' or any hero who does brave and kind things is called 'Le Prince Chéri' which the

## An Echo from Parnassus

English translate as ‘Prince Cherry’ or ‘Prince Charming,’ and they like to give that name to their pets.”

All this was most fascinating to hear and would make my story-books so much more interesting. But by this time we had reached Craigie House and Mr. Longfellow asked me to come into his study and wait while he wrote a note for me to take home and show my mother. Then the thunderbolt fell!

He went to his tall desk by the study window, where he always stood to write. The little note was quickly finished, and he handed it to me unsealed. I took it and promptly turned it with the addressed side down and away from me.

“Aren’t you going to look at it?” asked Mr. Longfellow.

I was startled. Was it possible that he didn’t know that one shouldn’t examine other people’s letters?

“Father says,” I stammered, “that is the way I should hold letters that are given me to carry or mail.”

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

"Of course," assented Mr. Longfellow, "but I thought you understood the letter was for *you*." Then I looked at the address and saw it was written in one of the absurd rimes he loved to amuse us with,—something about "A damsel named Hen-ery-etta" and a letter. But before I could unfold it, (it was folded in a "cocked-hat") his next words froze me to stone.

"To-morrow is your birthday and Washington's, and it is also Mr. Lowell's, so I have asked him to dine here with me in Washington's Headquarters. And now I am inviting you to dine here, too, with us both, and be our little hostess. Now run home and ask your mother if you may come."

I wonder I did not faint on the spot, so absolutely paralyzed was I at the thought. Numb and dumb in an agony of terror, I managed somehow to stumble out of the room and grope my way homeward. No, No, No! I could not, absolutely *could not* do it! It was not a question of would or should, I *could not*. And I could not show Mother the

## An Echo from Parnassus

note! For I knew she would make me go, that she would say as she always did on such an occasion, "It is something you will be glad to remember all your life." Remember! Oh, if I could only *forget*, if I could be ill, or die, —anything, anything to be spared such a horrible ordeal.

I was really becoming ill, sick with sheer terror, when I opened the front door, and Mother's voice called down:

"I've been waiting for you, dear. I want you to come up quickly and try on your embroidered buff Marseilles, for Mrs. Harrison Gray Otis has asked me to bring you to-morrow afternoon to receive with her at her Washington's birthday reception, because you were born on the day. It is a great honor for such a little girl, so you will wear your best suit, and put your hair in curl-papers to-night."

No condemned criminal ever heard his reprieve with deeper, profounder thanksgiving than I. Mother never saw my note. No one ever saw it. What I did with it, where I hid

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

it, or how I destroyed it I cannot recall. No one would ever have learned of its existence had not Mr. Longfellow met Mother a day or two later and asked, "Why did not little Henrietta come to dine with Lowell and me on Washington's birthday? We waited nearly half an hour for her. Did you think I was not serious in inviting her?"

So Mother learned. She did not scold me. She only sighed, and said, "I wish I had known! It was something you would have been glad to remember all your life. It was a note you would have been proud to keep always."

But I never had a qualm of conscience about it. There was a large, illuminated motto which hung at the foot of my bed, "Thou, God, Seest Me"—and there were moments when it made my childish soul squirm. But it did not squirm now, for, if God saw, He would certainly have understood how I felt. You did not have to explain things to God. He *knew!* And He had known that it was more than I could bear,

## An Echo from Parnassus

and He had taken my part and made Mrs. Otis invite me, and Mother accept for me, so that it became what I had heard my sisters call "a previous engagement." And previous engagements were things that must be kept, no matter what invitations turn up later.

It seems strange to me now that I should have been so terrified at the thought of dining in a familiar house with two friendly, pleasant gentlemen who were kind enough to notice me, while I had no terrors whatever about going to a big, public reception where all would be strangers—a crush of grown-ups, from the Governor and his staff and many other notables, down to the humblest men or women of respectable appearance who might present themselves.

Mrs. Harrison Gray Otis was a very great lady indeed—fashionable, wealthy, living in a great square mansion in Mt. Vernon Street on Beacon Hill which had a large entrance hall, a fine stairway and suites of reception rooms upstairs. She was as patriotic and public-spirited as she was.

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

clever and beautiful. One of her many fine enthusiasms was for the Father of His Country, our First President, whose birthday, she felt, was not sufficiently observed, and should be made a public holiday throughout the land. She set the example of celebrating it by throwing open her stately home to the public every 22nd of February from noon till late in the evening. The house was decorated with flags and bunting, and portraits of Washington. Refreshments were served continuously, and a military band played patriotic airs. Officers in full uniform were present from the Arsenals at Watertown and Springfield and the Charlestown Navy Yard, as well as the Governor's Staff, and various volunteer military organizations. For we were in the height of the Civil War days, a few months after Gettysburg, and the air was tense with patriotism and loyalty to the Union.

Nearly every family had some member at the front. Mr. Longfellow's eldest son Charles, a young lieutenant of nineteen,

## An Echo from Parnassus

who had run away from home to enlist, had been brought back seriously wounded shortly before Christmas, and was still bandaged and an invalid, eating his heart out to return. The Lowell family had been hard hit in all its branches. My brother was a schoolboy not old enough to enlist, but my father had two Dana cousins who were generals in the Northern army and we had a young cousin in the naval service of whom we were very fond, who had recently been killed. Another cousin, Captain George Hazen Dana, had been shot through the arm. The surgeons at the front had been on the point of amputating the arm—often the only recourse in those days before antiseptic surgery—when Hazen begged so piteously to be sent back to Cambridge for the operation, in order that he “might bury his arm in his own backyard,” that they had allowed him to go North. But, once in Cambridge, he saw to it that there was no operation and no backyard obsequies, and Hazen hung on to a rather troublesome limb for more than fifty years to come.

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

So the consciousness of the great struggle was perpetually being forced on us children. Military funerals were of almost daily occurrence, marching out Brattle Street past Craigie House to Mt. Auburn Cemetery, or out Concord Avenue, within a stone's throw of my father's house, to more distant burial grounds or to the Catholic Church on Observatory Hill. Muffled drums and funeral marches throbbed in our ears, flags at half-mast, reversed arms, crutches and slings, or the coat with the empty sleeve, were continually passing before our eyes. No one of us little girls was too small to "pick lint," or fold bandages for the Sanitary Commission. Even here, at Mrs. Otis's brilliant reception, I knew from my own family and relatives, that many of the fine ladies helping her receive, waiting on the guests, and moving about in their voluminous silk skirts and the rich old laces of their "berthas" and "fichus," were yet most active in their sacrifices for the cause. They would wear neither jewels nor gold, they worked daily, in brown holland

## An Echo from Parnassus

gowns and white aprons, at hospitals, at Union Hall in the rooms of the Sanitary Commission, and at sewing circles; while many ladies like my grandfather's sisters—too old for active work—paid for “substitutes” to fight for them or supported families whose breadwinners had been drafted to the front.

Of this Washington's Birthday scene with its many distinguished figures, I recall chiefly two—the famous “War Governor” of Massachusetts, John A. Andrew, short and very stout, but quick-moving and alert, with round face and curly blond head like a Cupid suddenly grown mature and stern—and the stately elegance of Mrs. Harrison Gray Otis herself, to whom we owe it that Washington's Birthday is now a legal holiday in nearly every state in the Union.

When Governor Andrew came up to greet my mother with his frank cordial smile, I liked and trusted him “right, straight off.” It was the first time I had seen him, though he was a neighbor and friend of my grand-

## Washington's Birthday, 1864

father, the poet Dana, and my sisters and I knew and played with his children. Governor Andrew did not long outlive the Civil War, in which he took such an energetic and honorable part. He died in 1867, and of him my grandfather Dana wrote to a friend:

“As I listened to Edwin Whipple’s Eulogy on Andrew I found myself saying in mind, ‘Of what other man could all this be said?’ The character it portrays seems almost to pass that of any single man, yet how true it is! He was of a noble and a sweet nature. How he made you love and respect him! The most companionable of men, yet the hardest of workers; self-denying, limited in means, but always helping the needy. I do miss our near neighbor.”

Perhaps, after all, the scenes and recollections of this Washington’s Birthday were more inspiring and educational to the mind of a child than would have been even the privilege of dining with two famous poets at Washington’s Headquarters. Who can say? But I wish I had kept Mr. Longfellow’s note!

## CHAPTER V

### “TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST” AND LATER

**I**T was always a source of amazement to my father that so many young lads should have been drawn to sea-life from reading his “Two Years Before the Mast.” He was constantly in receipt of letters from distracted parents asking his advice on how to deal with their sea-struck boys. In writing the story, he had been filled with the desire to enlighten the public about the real situation, so hard and often so unjust, of the seamen in our merchant marine. Certain details of the life he had suppressed as inartistic, repulsive to readers, and not greatly affecting the sailors—grown callous in their vagrant life—such as the loathsome sanitary conditions, the vermin-infested wood, the beetles they picked

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

from their clothing, the bedbugs they skimmed from their mugs of tea and bowls of stew, the habits and language of men drawn largely from the slums and by-ways of humanity, and from whom there was no escape, no privacy, day or night. But he thought that there still remained a picture of the hardships and injustices of the sailor's life that would leave no glamour of attraction for romantic and adventurous boyhood. He did not realize the love, the enthusiasm for the sea in all its aspects that glowed in every paragraph he wrote; the attachment to the ship itself as a thing of life and individuality, nor the tremendous human appeal of the sailor personally, with all his imperfections a humorous and lovable creature.

My father himself had gone to sea in utter ignorance of a sailor's life. He was just entering his junior year at Harvard College, a boy of eighteen, when he came down with an attack of measles which left his eyes so weak that he could not endure light, nor read without intense pain. This condition

## An Echo from Parnassus

went on without relief for several months, during which he had been forced to leave college and lead an idle, aimless life. Naturally of an adventurous spirit, he rebelled against this enforced idleness, and dreamed of a long sea voyage to strange lands and scenes that would perhaps restore his health and eyesight. But of the handling of a boat, his first experience had been that referred to by his boyhood friend, James Russell Lowell, in a paper on early days in Cambridge, as "those first essays of navigation on the Winthrop duck pond of the plucky boy who was afterwards to serve two famous years before the mast." My grandfather knew even less of sea life than his youthful son and did not like to advise him.

But at that time, 1834, Boston was at the height of its glory in the East India trade, and it was easy to secure passage on the big India merchantmen sailing to Bombay or Calcutta. Mr. Ingersoll Bowditch, son of Dr. Bowditch the celebrated mathematician, was going out to India on the ship *Japan* of

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

which he was part owner, and offered to take my father with him to Calcutta and back as a companion and a visitor at his house in that city. My father hesitated, through the feeling that the hard work, open air life and plain diet of a sailor before the mast would be of more physical benefit to him than the indolent life of a cabin passenger. Old Dr. Bowditch, who was present at the interview, encouraged my father in this feeling, saying that he himself had once taken a short voyage before the mast as a boy which had done him great good, and was sure that my father had the right feeling about it. And thus it came about that a berth was secured for him as a common sailor in the little brig *Pilgrim*, belonging to the Sturgis-Hooper Leather Company, bound to California for a cargo of hides. He went on board a few days after his nineteenth birthday, August 14, 1834, returning on the ship *Alert*, and landing in Boston, September 22, 1836, robust and strong, and fully recovered from his eye trouble. Or, as Charles Francis Adams de-

## An Echo from Parnassus

scribes him, “a tough, manly, sensible young fellow, afraid of nothing, eager to please and succeed, resolute, unselfish and honest.”

Mr. Adams, in his “Richard Henry Dana, a Biography” written in 1890 at the behest of the Massachusetts Historical Society, refers to my father’s two years at sea as “a course in natural life,—a course set down in no curriculum, which takes time, but is worth all the time it takes.”

Mr. Adams’ words will bear quoting further for the light they throw on the problems of our young manhood of the present generation, which it should cheer us to recall. “Most college graduates,” he says, “go directly from the lecture room to the pursuit of some calling, or the study of some profession. This is the conventionally correct thing to do. Those who snatch a year or two, during the days of their youth and vigor, from pleasure or from earning their living, and give it to a close communion with nature in men and in things, are few indeed. What Dana in 1835 got for himself, the Civil War,

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

thrust upon the generation that followed.” And, we may add, the Great War of 1917-18 thrust our young men of to-day into the same course. They in turn, were forced to “waste,” as is sometimes said, precious years in a dangerous experience that seems to have led them nowhere. “Yet,” writes Adams of my father’s forecastle adventure and of his own “wasted” four years in the Civil War, “the experience was of incalculable worth. It brought out manhood, it showed how much of the heroic is latent. Wherever there was pure metal, the dross was purged from it. It is a crucial test. While baser natures may succumb, he who has in him the qualities of true manhood comes out from the ordeal purged and strengthened. The forecastle did Dana nothing but good.”

Father’s class at Harvard had graduated while he was at sea. In December of 1836, after his return, he joined the then Senior Class, that of 1837, and so well did he make up for lost time, that at their graduation the following June he was, by marks,

## An Echo from Parnassus

the first scholar of the class. He was not allowed to take that rank, however, as he had not been with the class through the full college year, but at Commencement he was given the part usually allotted to fifth scholar. An aged alumnus present writes of the "dissertation by Richard Dana, son of R. H. Dana and grandson of former Chief Justice Francis Dana. He is a handsome youth and spoke well."

Those who remembered him at this period, described Father as a broad-shouldered, erect young fellow, rather below than above medium height, with a profusion of curling chestnut-brown hair, a firm, strong mouth and singularly attractive smile, his aspect bright and buoyant. The laughing eyes were blue in color.

The return to college life was a great delight to my father. After his long absence from study, he resumed it with keenest enjoyment. In six months he not only caught up with but passed the members of his class, took a Bowdoin prize for English composi-

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

tion and the first Boylston prize for elocution, and was elected a member of both the Porcellian and the Hasty Pudding Clubs. Immediately after graduation he entered the Harvard (Dane) Law School, then at the period of its highest excellence under Judge Story and Professor Greenleaf.

He had not chosen the law from any conscious attraction for it, but had, rather, drifted into it from a sort of hereditary impulsion. His great-grandfather, Councilor Richard Dana, had been a prominent lawyer, magistrate and patriot just before the culmination of the Revolutionary troubles, and his grandfather, Francis Dana, after holding many offices of distinction, was made a Justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts in 1785 and was Chief Justice from 1791 until his retirement in 1806.

His father, my grandfather, Richard Henry Dana the elder, had inherited the law libraries of these and several other legal forbears, and had himself studied law, been admitted to the Boston bar, and practiced, as

## An Echo from Parnassus

he said, "long enough to keep the chain whole —for the legal profession has run in our family lines, unbroken, quite as long as in any family in the country."

But my father was also drawn to the law by the feeling that through it he might have occasions to be of use to some of his humble sailor friends, and many a time he gave up important and lucrative cases to work *gratis* for the poor fellows who sought him out in their troubles.

From the very first recitation the study began to interest him deeply. He always spoke with the warmest admiration of his instructors and of their high professional spirit. Judge Story had been for twenty years Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and was author of a series of treatises that had brought him great international fame. With much personal charm and an inspiring enthusiasm of manner, he made a most stimulating teacher. "We were placed," Father used to say, "in a library under learned, honorable and gentlemanly instruc-

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

tors, and invited to pursue the study of jurisprudence as a system of philosophy, free from all the details, chicanery and responsibilities of practice.”

Among his fellow law-students was one who became a lifelong friend and whom I remember well from his frequent visits to our home—William M. Evarts, of whom he then wrote, “If Evarts does not become distinguished he will disappoint more persons than any other young man whom I have ever met with.” He who became the most brilliant member of the New York bar, United States Senator for many years and Secretary of State in President Hayes’ Cabinet certainly gave his friends no cause for disappointment. As the years went on, there came to be a regular engagement between Evarts, my father, Judge Rockwood Hoar and Justice Horace Gray of the United States Supreme Court, to meet every summer at the Evarts farm in Windsor, Vermont, for a short week of joyous reminiscence of their Law School days of *Auld Lang Syne*. A

## An Echo from Parnassus

remarkable group they made, as unlike in appearance as in temperament. Evarts, so thin he looked as if a breath might blow him away, and Hoar sturdy and stout; my father slightly below the medium height, and Gray six feet four. We knew them all as brilliant and witty talkers, and after his return Father would keep us laughing for days with anecdotes of their fun and repartee.

It was while at the Law School that my father wrote out, from a few scanty notes taken on shipboard his "Two Years Before the Mast," little dreaming this romance of the sea was to become an international classic. It must have been written under high pressure, for not only was he doing brilliant work in the Law School, but was also instructor of elocution in the college, which called for a number of hours daily in class work. He had taken this position wishing to relieve his father, whose means were limited, of the expense of the long preparation for professional life.

He had become sincerely interested in his

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

fellow humans on shipboard, and eager to obtain greater justice for them in their hard lives. A very complete sketch of the hardships and injustices of a sailor’s life, written from the fulness of his heart while on the scene, had unfortunately been lost. Landing at India Wharf on his return from sea, he had, in his eagerness to rejoin his family, left his sea chest in charge of a friend to be expressed to him. He never saw it again! With its precious contents, his manuscript, his sea-togs, some presents and souvenirs of the California coast—it had disappeared never to be recovered. All that he had to guide him in writing his book was a small pocket diary containing little beside dates. But there remained the unwritten memories of his heart.

The book, published in 1840, by Harper & Brothers, was an immediate, a sensational success. It brought him fame, but it did not bring him fortune! Modest and inexperienced, he had sold the manuscript to Harper & Brothers, then the foremost publishing

## An Echo from Parnassus

house in the country for \$250, and they held the copyright for twenty-eight years, during which time he received not one penny from the numberless editions brought out in this country.

England treated him more handsomely. Two young friends of my father's, lately returned from delightful social visits in England, happened to be among the earliest readers of the book on its appearance, and so enthusiastic were they over the tale, that they sent copies of it to their late hosts in England. These in their turn brought the book to the attention of one of the great publishing houses of London. There being no international copyright law in those days to prevent, large printings of the story were soon brought out, and the English—a maritime nation, more familiar than our own reading classes with sea-faring life—seized upon it with avidity. Though under no obligations, either to the author or his American publishers, the house of Moxon, pleased with the instantaneous success of the book, volun-

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

tarily sent my father not alone a large number of presentation copies of their English edition, but a check for \$500—double the sum that Harpers had paid for the ownership of the original manuscript. Other foreign editions quickly followed, as well as most gratifying words of appreciation from Lord Brougham, Charles Dickens, the Irish poet Thomas Moore, the novelist Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, the poet Samuel Rogers, and other famous writers and critics of the time.

It may be of interest to know that the two young friends to whose enthusiasm my father owed his first introduction to literary England, were the beautiful Miss Frances Appleton, whom my father describes as “looking like a princess, reserved and self-possessed,” who later became the wife of the poet Longfellow, and Charles Sumner, a highly cultivated and very charming young man, a few years older than Father. He had had great social success abroad, and was soon to become famous in his own land as a leader of the Anti-Slavery movement, and for many

## An Echo from Parnassus

years represented Massachusetts in the United States Senate.

Popular as his book became in this country, it was always from England that Father received his highest recognition. A year after its publication, when Lord Morpeth visited the States in 1841, one of the first persons he asked to see was "the young author of 'Two Years Before the Mast.'" Dickens came over the following year, 1842. When he arrived in Boston the city went mad over him, and he was almost mobbed with visitors, so that my father decided not to attempt to call on him. But Dickens sent him a written message, saying that he wished to see him and asking him to call, fixing the hour. When Father arrived at the appointed time he found people being turned away from the Tremont House by the scores, and feared he would not get in. But the moment he gave his name he was at once admitted and shown up to Dickens' room, where he was received with the greatest cordiality—Dickens explaining that he had reserved this hour for Father and for

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

Longfellow, who soon afterwards appeared. There they had a quiet, uninterrupted hour together, of fascinating talk.

Father described Dickens as looking “wide awake, up to everything, with a rapid dashing way of talking, full of cleverness, with quick feelings and great ardor, yet natural and unpretending. He did not say a single thing for display.” At the great public dinner given to Dickens on February 1st, 1842, my father, then only twenty-six years old, was called upon to be one of the small group of speakers. Of this occasion Father said, “Dickens spoke excellently. I never heard a speech which went off better. He is no orator, but spoke naturally with a good voice, beautiful intonation, and an ardent and generous manner.” A few days later, the morning that Dickens was leaving Boston, he asked my father to breakfast with Mrs. Dickens and himself. Father sat next to him and described him as “very agreeable and full of life. He is the *cleverest* man I ever met,—I mean he impresses you more

## An Echo from Parnassus

with the alertness of his various powers. His forces are always in marching order."

For many years thereafter nearly every Englishman who visited the States came armed with letters of introduction to my father, and when he made his first visit to England, in 1856, sixteen years after the publication of his book, his short and wholly unheralded visit of a scant four weeks became a veritable social and literary ovation.

The four weeks might have been five, but for the advice of the historian Macaulay, advice full of wisdom and interest for all who must plan their lives on a limited scale. At a dinner given by Lord Chancellor Cranworth, where were present beside the host and my father, Lord Macaulay, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Charles Russell of the Grenadier Guards, a hero of the Crimean War, and Sir Henry Holland—Lord Cranworth put the question whether Mr. Dana had best go on to Paris, or give his one remaining week of vacation to seeing more of England. Macaulay said,

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

“Mr. Dana has given four weeks to England, and the question is whether a fifth week shall be given to a further view of England or to France. I say decidedly, France. One week added to four is not much; but one week of new impressions, of a new country, a new people, will give something he will never forget, and of great value of itself.” Others were in favor of England on the ground of doing one thing well and not two things superficially. In the end Father decided in favor of Macaulay’s advice and always rejoiced in the memory of his crowded, brilliant week in France, in the heyday of the Second Empire.

He had been told that, at the dinner-table, Macaulay would often absorb the conversation and preach or tyrannize over his hearers. On the occasion of the Cranworth dinner, however, he simply took his share, cleverly and in excellent spirits. They discussed the recent assault on Charles Sumner in the United States Senate and the carrying of weapons, and my father explained to them

## An Echo from Parnassus

that every United States citizen had a right, by the Constitution, to bear arms.

“And so has every subject in Great Britain, by Act of Parliament,” said the Speaker.

But Macaulay interrupted. “Being a Protestant! the Act says ‘being a Protestant.’ Lo! the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of England (being a Catholic), cannot carry a stiletto; but Mr. Spooner (being a Protestant)—Mr. Spooner may carry a howitzer and a brace of revolvers.”

Another question raised was which of the English cathedrals Father should visit, having seen none outside of London. Some at the table said Salisbury, some York Minster, some Canterbury, etc. But Macaulay said “Lincoln! See Lincoln! That is the best of all.” Father did not then select Lincoln, though he visited some of the others named. In later years, however, he saw Lincoln and declared, “Macaulay was right! If I had to choose among all, taking inside and outside, form and color, beauty, size and interest—all into account—give me Lincoln!”

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

This English visit of my father's was made a year before my birth, but it had led to friendships and correspondence with some of England's finest minds which continued throughout his life, so that from my infancy up, through childhood and youth, I was accustomed to seeing in my father's rooms the engraved and autographed portraits, and in later days photographs of distinguished English statesmen and men of letters, or portraits of their families, their country seats, and presentation copies of their books, testifying to their friendship for and admiration of my father. Many of the portraits were in military or naval uniforms, or in their robes of office ermine, and full flowing wigs, most impressive and delightful to the eyes of a child, such as the Lord Chancellors and Justices, and the Judge of Admiralty Sir Robert Phillimore. Even the prosaic picture of the Duke of Argyll in civilian clothes, lolling in an armchair, had its thrill, for was he not, after all, “The MacCallum More,” the heir of Scott's “Lord of the Isles”?

## An Echo from Parnassus

From time to time there would also be letters, which we all listened to with pride and interest, from the Prime Minister William E. Gladstone, the Lord Chancellors Cranworth and Selborne, the then Duke of Argyll (author of "The Reign of Law"), Sir John Duke Coleridge and his son the Chief Justice, Lord Tenterden, Sir William Heathcote, Sir Roundell Palmer, the Speaker Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), Sir Frederick Pollock, Lord Wensleydale, the then Marquis of Lansdowne—acknowledged socially and intellectually the leader of the British aristocracy—Lord Kinnaird, connected by marriage with the English branch of the Dana family,\* and Sir Wm. Vernon Harcourt.

I have no list of Father's correspondents, I have not seen the letters in forty years, but

\* These were the descendants of Rev. Edmund Dana, the Tory brother of Chief Justice Francis Dana, who some time prior to the American Revolution, had settled in England and married Hon. Helen Kinnaird, niece and heiress of Sir William Pulteney of Craig y Nos Castle, Wales. After being held for many years by the English Danas, Craig y Nos Castle was sold to the famous singer, Adelina Patti, and was her residence till her death.

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

I have given names of some of these whose personalities had become most vivid and familiar to me in those youthful days. I remember one time when Father called me into his study to see a letter asking for his autograph. That was not an uncommon request, of course, but he thought this one would have special interest for me because it came from “a real, live, royal Prince”—Queen Victoria’s youngest son, Prince Leopold, a lad only a few years older than myself. Perhaps I was not quite as excited over it as Father expected me to be, but there had already been a letter from the Queen’s sailor nephew, Prince Victor of Hohenlohe, with whom Father had had a very pleasant acquaintance in England, and it seemed to me now high time that he should be hearing from the Queen’s Majesty herself!

The British Admiralty had ordered, soon after its publication in England, that a copy of “Two Years Before the Mast” should be placed in the library of every ship in the British Navy, and its Naval Academies and

## An Echo from Parnassus

training ships, as well as on the large ships of the Mercantile Marine. In 1911, during a stay in Paris, I met Captain Videl of the French navy, traveler, writer, and collaborator with Pierre Loti in several of his works. Someone had told him that my father had written a famous story of the sea, yet he did not associate the name of Dana with any sea story that he knew, and he thought he knew them all. But I happened to mention that the book was in every British battleship. Then he exclaimed, "But, Mrs. Skinner, now of course I know what book it must be! We too, in the French navy, have a wonderful sea story of the California coast in all our naval vessels and training schools, but the name of the author has never been given. It is in a French edition, translated some sixty or seventy years ago, and is anonymous. But there can be no doubt it is your father's book." I recalled then, that the Harpers' first editions gave only the writer's initials, and it was not till the book had been through several printings that it was

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

brought out with my father's name in full.

In 1868 the Harpers' copyright expired and “Two Years Before the Mast” entered upon a second stage. Father had arranged with Ticknor and Fields (now Houghton and Mifflin) for the new copyright, planning an “Author's Edition” with an appended chapter “Twenty-four Years After.” In this chapter he would give an account of revisiting the California coast in 1859, and, so far as possible, trace the after life and adventures of all the characters mentioned in the book. This edition was published in 1869 and aroused wide-spread interest. Other printings were brought out by the same firm —illustrated editions and editions de luxe.

In the preparation of this “Author's Edition” his children took pride in having their small part, as he dictated to them his material for the new chapter. One of my sisters, who had studied Spanish, helped him in the revision of the foreign words, the others wrote from his dictation. Father, who was full of sentiment about his family, did not

## An Echo from Parnassus

wish even his youngest little girl, then ten and a half years old, to be left out. But, ever thoughtful of his children's feelings, he gave me a secret trial first, in order that, if it were a failure, I should be spared the mortification of having others know of it. So I crept into his study one morning, thrilled with the importance and secrecy of it all, and as I climbed up to and took my seat on the high, long-legged stool placed in front of the tall desk at which Father, after the custom of the day, stood to write, I do not know whether I was more proud or frightened, as I dipped my quill-pen in the ink and waited for his first words.

Father always paced back and forth the length of the room as he dictated. He spoke slowly and his enunciation was very distinct. Fortunately for me, dictation was part of our regular daily routine in the study of English at Miss Davie's little school, and it also was a pretty stiff one. For we must average a certain number of words within the fifteen minutes allowed, and must do our

## “Two Years Before the Mast”

own spelling, punctuation and paragraphing unaided, and write legibly withal. So, in comparison to the tricky words and constructions on which I was daily exercised, Father's simple, flowing, narrative English, and his preference for short, Anglo-Saxon words made his dictation seem easy and full of interest. As he passed the desk in pacing back and forth, he probably cast glances over my paper without my knowledge and found it promising, for he continued the dictation for the usual hour of each one's stint, and did not hurt my childish pride by offering to spell the harder words for me. He did, however, dictate most carefully the punctuation and paragraphing, considering them an integral part of his own job, which he would leave to no one else.

I had won my spurs, so to speak, though I could not then know that this hour was to be the forerunner of many hours, of years even, when I should act as my father's secretary in the preparation of his *Magnum Opus*, the great work on International Law

## An Echo from Parnassus

which he hoped would be the crown of his career, both as jurist and man of letters.

But this, alas! was not to be! "Leaving the plowshare in the furrow," he died in Rome, of pneumonia, on January 6th, 1882, in the sixty-seventh year of his age.

And there in Rome we laid him to rest. For it was a city that he loved, the Christian Rome of spiritual appeal of which he had said, "It makes me happy just to feel the stones of Rome beneath my feet." To him it was the city Byron saw, "Rome, Rome, my country, City of the Soul." He lies there in the old English cemetery where stands the pyramid of Caius Cestus, under the shade of its tall, somber cypress trees, close by the graves of Keats and Shelley.

"A stranger's roof to hold thy head,  
A stranger's foot thy grave to tread.  
Desert and rock and Alp and sea  
Spreading between thy home and thee!"

## CHAPTER VI

### REAL VICTORIANS AT SCHOOL

QUEEN VICTORIA came to the throne in 1837, a mere slip of a schoolgirl, who was to give her name to the long period of sixty-three years that followed. We are apt to class as "Victorian" all that lived and flourished within that period. As a matter of fact, the "Early Victorians" were not the products of that age, but of a far different one. The men who gave distinction to the first twenty-five years of Victoria's reign had received their education and formed their manners and habits of thought during the era of George IV and William IV. Theirs was an age when the rigid conventions and reserves of the respectable and the high-minded were not a mere veneer of Puritanism, but a courageous re-

## An Echo from Parnassus

volt against the license and profligacy of Court and Smart Set. It was the protest and defense of all that was best in society against the dangerous laxity of the time. It formed both in England and our country a galaxy of clean-living, high-thinking men and women. The youthful Victoria herself was a reaction against her ancestry and environment, and as such, made a profound appeal to all that was best and most chivalrous in the spirit of a manly race.

It is a perfectly logical distinction, therefore, to divide this long reign—so full of marvels, both in the material and the spiritual orders—into three distinct periods of Early, Middle and Late Victorian. The first period includes the long list of those distinguished men who bore the fruit of their talents during the actual Victorian era, but whose seeding and early growth were in a startlingly different soil and climate. It is to this first period that Mr. Longfellow and his contemporaries belong.

The Mid-Victorians are the grandparents

## Real Victorians at School

of the youth of to-day. They are truly *all*-Victorian, in the sense that they were both born and brought up in that period and had reached middle age when it closed. We who learned our childhood's lessons in the little school in Craigie House were *real* Victorians, receiving an American Victorian education from an English governess of Early Victorian traditions.

We were also *real* Victorians in the obvious sense that we really existed and were not figments of Post-Victorian imagination. I shall try to give here a memory picture of ourselves and of the influences that guided and surrounded us in those far-off early days —our teachers, our studies, our sports.

My career at the little school in Craigie House, of which I was to retain such happy memories, did not begin any too promisingly for me. It was not my first taste of school life. I had been for nearly two years a pupil of Mrs. Delano's select Primary School in Linnæan Street, next to the Harvard Botanical Garden, and was already in the Third

## An Echo from Parnassus

Reader and Short Division. For in that era we children of well-to-do families, whose mothers or grandmothers, aunts or older sisters had time to devote to us, got a good start at home in learning to read, long before we were of school age. We were given no set tasks, but learned unconsciously, a bit here and a bit there, through the blocks we played with, and through the many illustrated fairy tales, Mother Goose rimes and Bible stories that our elders patiently entertained us with. They tactfully guided the wonderful powers of observation and memory that children from two and a half to five years of age are endowed with, till we found ourselves reading and spelling without effort or fatigue, and learning rimes and nursery tales with childish zest and ambition. I was four and a half when I began at the Delano School and was put at once into the Second Reader with other children of my own age. I remember noticing among the pupils a few as old as six and even seven years of age, who were learning their letters for the first

## Real Victorians at School

time and having a long, hard struggle of it. I thought they must be lazy or stupid. Later I realized it was simply that they had not been fortunate enough to have home attention in their most receptive years. Books would never be to them the recreation and source of joy they were to us.

But in the winter of 1863-4 I was taken out of the bare, stiff, orderly classrooms of the Delano School. There the pupils each had their own little wooden desk and low chair, and were carefully graded with children of their own age and attainments, and were ruled by a system of competitions and rewards. The change to Craigie House was very great. I was now the youngest of a group of eight children, ranging from seven to twelve years of age, mingled together in the ease and informality of comfortable home surroundings. Owing to the difference in our ages, there was little class or group work. The pupils for the most part were taught individually and everything seemed rather easy-going and happy-go-lucky. Rules there

## An Echo from Parnassus

were, but they seemed to be very vague and elastic. I did not realize that this very vagueness and elasticity made them all the more binding and rigid, for they were a matter of honor. Not that much was *said* about honor, but it was *understood*. It was much like my mother's discipline at home. Mother never locked us in the closet for our misdeeds, but she would say, "Go upstairs to my bedroom, take a chair into the closet and sit there half an hour. You may leave the door open six inches for light and air." It was never *said* that we were to take neither books nor toys to amuse ourselves with while waiting, but it was "understood." We were *trusted*, and so it became impossible to do anything but carry out our punishment in its implied spirit. It was the same under Miss Davie's easy, pleasant management. There were no rules of conduct, no rewards, no punishments. For convenience there was a schedule of work for each day and hour, and each child had its "report book" in which we were marked daily for our work and our

## Real Victorians at School

conduct. But we were governed first and last by our own sense of honor, and the “public opinion” of our schoolmates.

With so much liberty and ease I should have been a happy child. But not only had I to get accustomed to new methods and new companions, but also to a situation that was intolerable to my pride. For being both the youngest and the least advanced, I was looked upon as a mere infant, and instead of having my own desk, was placed at Miss Davie’s table in a baby’s “high chair.” To add injury to insult, the only boy pupil, Robert, or “Toto” Ames—son of the artist, Joseph Ames, and his gifted and romantically beautiful wife—had the cheerful inspiration to put the newcomer through a course of hazing. Toto had inherited his mother’s beauty, with clustering brown curls, large, appealing brown eyes and the face of a Reynolds cherub. But within was the soul of an imp. From the wreck of some Punch and Judy show he had salvaged the hideous figure of “Jack Ketch, the Hang-

## An Echo from Parnassus

man" and this he fastened with a long elastic cord to my high chair, so that it bobbed up and down with every movement I made, hitting against my legs and ankles. To get down from the chair I had to turn round and climb down, facing inward, and the odious puppet would fly up and hit me on the chest or in the face. I was too proud to cry, and the other children, not realizing that I was actually hurt and terrified, only thought it excruciatingly funny, and shrieked with laughter. Even kind, comfortable, motherly Miss Davie smiled indulgently. But when Toto's hilarious pranks grew too disturbing for the discipline of the schoolroom, she would tell me that I might take my books and study my lessons in the adjoining dressing room. This was considered a privilege, as one could shut oneself up alone and undisturbed, and it had a large bright window, with deep, cushioned window-seat. There I could curl myself up, draw the Turkey red curtains about me and cry unseen. My chief memory of that first term at Craigie House

## Real Victorians at School

is of a forlorn little figure, trying between sobs to memorize the tables of weights and measures.

I should have felt better if I could have got back at Toto in any way. I was not afraid of him, for I had played with boys ever since I could remember, and I was always ready to tackle any boy near my own size in a fair fight. But Toto was the kind who went always with a gang of other boys, so there was no chance to get him alone, and he walked to school and home again under the protection of his older sister, a tall girl of twelve. As a fist fight was one of the things that I knew instinctively had no place in a schoolroom, there seemed nothing I could do about it but be proud and pretend that I didn't mind being hazed.

But my school "report" at the end of that first term was a disgrace! It was a shock to poor Mother, who had been accustomed to my bringing home various little prizes and "rewards of merit" from Mrs. Delano's each month. So she took me up to her room for

## An Echo from Parnassus

an explanation. There I vowed that I hated the Craigie House schoolroom, hated the children and above all else, I loathed from the bottom of my soul all arithmetic textbooks, both Colburn's Mental and Emerson's Written.

Mother looked thoughtful. She could understand why the strangeness of a new schoolroom might upset me, but why didn't I like the children?

"They call me names!" I sobbed out.

"Oh, you must be mistaken; they are such well-bred little girls! What kind of 'names' do you mean?"

"They said I was c-c-conceited!" I stammered.

"That is something you can easily avoid," suggested Mother. "They cannot call you so if you do not boast or argue. Now tell me what you find so hard about arithmetic."

"It's the tables of weights and measures I have to learn by heart," I sighed, gloomily. "They don't mean anything to me."

Now Mother had been brought up in the

## Real Victorians at School

ideas of Miss Maria Edgeworth and Miss Hannah More, that children should be educated mentally and morally through lessons drawn pleasantly and easily from the practical things of daily life. So, after a moment's thought she said:

“Now, run down to the kitchen, dear, and ask Joanna to let you help her make the cake.”

All children love messing round the kitchen, so I gladly flew to the back stairs and slid down the banisters to the kitchen door. (Alas! poor city children of to-day, brought up in flats, with elevators, what do you know of the thrills of sliding down banisters!) There I found good-natured, fat Irish Joanna weighing sugar and raisins in a fascinating pair of scales, while all about were attractive looking tins and bowls of various shapes and sizes. In a trice the world was changed for me. Weights and measures were now something real, human and practical. I spent a fascinated hour weighing and measuring, stirring and mixing, sugar,

## An Echo from Parnassus

flour, butter, raisins, milk. One thing led to another, and good-natured Joanna took me down cellar to see a ton of coal, a cord of wood, a barrel of apples, a bushel of potatoes, a gallon jug of molasses, a hogshead of rain water. I became seized with a perfect fever of measuring heights and lengths. My report in arithmetic for the ensuing term was excellent. Meeting Miss Davie a few weeks later, Mother inquired about my conduct, and Miss Davie replied smilingly, "She is getting on very well. She does not kick up as much as she did at first,"—an answer that somewhat startled Mother, who had hardly expected to hear an expression like "kick up" from a pupil of the ultra-correct Miss Sewell.

The succeeding season things went much more happily. Two sources of woe had been eliminated, the high chair had been relegated to the storeroom, and Toto Ames had been placed in a boys' school, for the good of his soul—and ours. I was gradually getting into my stride and being accepted by the younger girls as their equal in prowess both

## Real Victorians at School

in games and studies. Annie and I had discovered a similarity of taste in the matter of books, such as Miss Charlotte Yonge's historical tales of "Richard the Fearless" and "Lances of Lynwood," Scott's "Talisman" and "Ivanhoe," Hendrik Ponsonby's "Lion of Flanders," Grace Greenwood's "Merrie England" and a beautifully illustrated book of the "Legends of Charlemagne"—in short, everything we could lay our hands on that related to Knights in armor, the Crusades and the Holy Grail, the Round Table, or the outlaws of Sherwood Forest. We read and re-read these tales with tireless enthusiasm, and in our hours of recreation acted them out in the garden. There we galloped madly round the grounds on our imaginary steeds, Brigliador, Bayard, Black Auster, or the gallant Roland of Browning's poem. With grace-sticks for swords and croquet mallets for battle-axes we slashed blood-thirstily at bushes and trees, in fierce encounter with dragons or Saracens. History, of course, was our favorite study.

## An Echo from Parnassus

History was one of the few studies that we did in groups and as class-work. Four or five of us younger ones were reading with Miss Davie Dickens' "Child's History of England," while the whole school joined in reading with us Sewell's histories of Greece and Ancient Rome. Grouped around the large center table, we read aloud by turns one chapter at a time, which we were encouraged to discuss, to ask questions about—even to act out some of the scenes described. This made it all very real and vivid to us, and when we were questioned on this chapter at the next lesson there would be very little we had forgotten or overlooked. Because of these lively talks and discussions, we had given ourselves the name of "Parliament," and by that name we always speak of the little school to this day. We took sides vehemently in such matters as the Trojan War, the struggle between Romans and Carthaginians, or between Greeks and Romans. I was so violently for the Greeks as against the Romans that I determined to visit Greece.

## Real Victorians at School

To that end I started to write a history of England in order to earn a thousand dollars for the journey. There still exists in the archives of "Parliament" a pencil sketch by Mr. Longfellow's nephew "Wad" (later the popular Boston architect, A. Wadsworth Longfellow), entitled "Henrietta going to Greece." In this the eight-year-old-child is seen boarding a ship. She is grasping a bag labeled "\$1,000," while several volumes of "History of England" are piled beside the gangplank. I have my doubts whether the history ever progressed further than Boadicea and the landing of the Romans! And much as I traveled in later years, I was destined never to reach Greece.

In connection with our ancient history, Miss Davie read with us Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," and selections from Plutarch's "Lives." The mythology called for Hawthorne's "Wonderbook" and "Tanglewood Tales." This incited some of us to hunt up for ourselves poems and stories that bore on historical subjects.

## An Echo from Parnassus

Another study which we took all together in class, and which we were very enthusiastic about was Brewer's "Science of Familiar Things." We had no laboratory or formal instruments of experiment. But to stir our teacups and see the bubbles follow the spoon or travel to the edges of the cup and cling there, and learn that it was in obedience to a law of nature with the beautiful mouth-filling name of "capillary attraction," was an unspeakable delight. One simple homemade experiment followed another. We read of the wonderful laws governing the things we were seeing about us every day—gravitation, centrifugal force, magnets, lightning and thunder, cloud formations, electricity, steam and its wonders, the gases that made the air we breathed and the water we drank, the elements of physics, of movement and inertia; why, we could feel our minds growing and expanding within us almost to bursting!

Another textbook we used (though more for reference than for study) was that classic of English schoolrooms, "Mangnalls' Ques-

## Real Victorians at School

tions”—a sort of catechism of general information. It might well have been called, like one of the Questionnaires so popular in this day and age, “I Ought to Know That,” for it treated of every subject in earth and heaven, and the waters under the earth, in nutshell form. I am sure “Mangnall’s Questions” must have been the source of the precocious attainments of the little Miss Bertrams in Jane Austen’s “Mansfield Park.” They found their ten-year-old-cousin, Fanny Price, “so ignorant,” because she could not, as they had done long before her age, “repeat the chronological order of the kings of England, with the dates of their accession and most of the principal events of their reigns, and of the Roman emperors as low as Severus; besides a great deal of the heathen mythology, and all the metals, semi-metals, planets and distinguished philosophers.” But Fanny got back at them in the end, for I defy anyone to discuss nature and the mind in lengthier or more discreetly chosen phrases than simple Fanny employed at seventeen!

## An Echo from Parnassus

To enliven our Latin lessons Miss Davie taught us some gay little jingles in use among English children, as memory aids, and let us make others for our own help and entertainment. But I fear they would be very misleading as an aid to beginners in these days of so-called "Roman" pronunciations. My older sisters, following the College preparatory classes at the Cambridge High School, scorned the "babyish and superficial" method of Miss Davie. But after all, at eight or nine years of age we were little more than babies, and these Latin lessons were something we could really enjoy. Irregular verbs and lists of exceptions had no terrors for us so long as we might turn them into nonsense verses. Moreover, they stuck in our memory.

Perhaps the most thorough instruction we received was in English. There was nothing superficial about that, although we were not given formal lessons in English grammar. It was thought that the study of Latin grammar would give us enough understanding of

## Real Victorians at School

parts of speech, of syntax and parsing, until we were old enough to take up rhetoric. Reading, writing, spelling, written definitions in our own words, dictation and composition formed our regular work, and we had in addition an unusual textbook on etymology—Brewer's "Scholars' Companion." Derivations of words from Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon or Old French roots, drills on prefixes and suffixes, synonyms and idioms would have delighted a cross-word puzzler. A better, more interestingly arranged study of language I have never seen.

But our life was not all in books or study, however interesting. School began at nine o'clock, but we usually assembled half or three-quarters of an hour earlier for exercise in the open air, comprising lively running games like Tag, I Spy, and Prisoner's Base. After the closing of school at one o'clock we remained for another hour till time to go home for the two o'clock dinner. Three o'clock saw us back again to play till dark. I doubt if any children ever were

## An Echo from Parnassus

given a larger liberty in their pursuits, restrained only by the trust reposed in us. A few simple rules about keeping within certain bounds and returning at certain hours, we religiously observed, and I think fully deserved the confidence placed in us.

The large grounds gave us ample opportunity to play a variety of games. The huge trunks of the noble elms, the many clumps of bushes and shrubs bordering the lawn, and the thick high hedges of lilac or evergreen made fine places of concealment for I Spy and the front lawn for Prisoner's Base. In the afternoon we usually roamed farther afield, climbing trees and fences, racing our hoops, practicing baseball and cricket. Tennis had not then been taken up in the States, but we had badminton, grace-sticks, battledore and shuttlecock, handball, and the very fashionable games of the Sixties—croquet and archery. Gymnastics were greatly in vogue for girls. Dr. Dio Lewis was at the height of his popularity, preaching calisthenics, sun baths and outdoor sleeping.

## Real Victorians at School

The older schoolgirls and society girls went to gymnasiums and became expert on the trapeze, parallel bars, and with foils and Indian clubs. "Dress-reform" ideas flourished. Naturally gymnastics were incompatible with the hoop skirts and stays of the period, so these were reserved for formal wear only. The regular sports costume for gymnasium and walking consisted of "bloomers," which had been introduced about 1850 by Mrs. Bloomer, short "Balmoral" skirts (such as worn by Queen Victoria when in Scotland) and the full, loose "Garibaldi shirt."

We younger children at Craigie House did not go to gymnasiums. The spontaneous, jolly, romping games of youth were thought better for the tender muscles of growing childhood than any systematic drill. But in the classroom we were encouraged to sit straight with head up and shoulders well thrown back. To this end we often studied with "bean bags" poised on our heads. These were squares of cotton-ticking stuffed

## An Echo from Parnassus

with dried beans, balancing easily on our heads. As they were very light and flexible, so long as we sat straight we were unconscious of them. But, if we stooped, or lolled in our chairs, down came the bean bags tumbling over our noses! We became quite expert at balancing piles of books on our heads and walking round the room with them, arms akimbo. There was a rumor that Emily Foster and her brother Alfred practiced waltzing with glasses of water on their heads and could circle a room without disaster. But we could not confirm this rumor, as they practiced at home.

With winter came snow and ice, and their attendant sports, skating and coasting. For the latter, the front terraces with their two sloping banks made our usual playground. Why it was that, with several acres of grounds and both sides of the lawn to choose from, we always played on the terrace directly in front of Mr. Longfellow's study windows, I cannot explain. But with all our shouting and screaming at play I cannot re-

## Real Victorians at School

call that he ever once asked for quiet, or suggested our playing elsewhere. He writes in his diary:

“Children are pleasant to see playing together. I take infinite delight in seeing their world go on around me, and feel all the tenderness of the words that fell from the blessed lips, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me.’ After that benediction how can anyone dare to deal harshly with a child!”

So we noisy little “tomboys” played as heartily and as long as we pleased, neither parents nor governess guiding or interfering. They were not indifferent, however, and doubtless were better aware than we knew of the nature of our activities.

For winter sports, we were encased in knitted woolen tights, with rubber boots coming to our knees. Under our coats we wore the equivalents of the modern “sweater”—cardigan jackets or woolen “Sonntags”—named respectively for the hero of the “Charge of the Light Brigade,”

## An Echo from Parnassus

and for the great singer of our mothers' day, Henriette Sonntag. Hoods, or light fleecy "clouds," tied under our chins, kept head and ears warm. We wore long, bright-colored, knitted scarves wrapped round our throats, and our hands and arms were protected by mittens and "wristers." We could roll and wallow in the deepest snow with impunity.

We had drawn up strict rules for our sports, most of them, I think, invented by Edie, for she was a born leader. One was that we must give a shout of warning before starting to coast from the upper terrace. This was quite necessary, as we followed each other in rapid succession, and were liable to have spills and collisions. Several of us had inherited boys' "clipper" sleds from older brothers. On these we went down in true boy fashion—flat on our faces, head foremost down the hillocks in the manner which even little mid-Victorian damsels did not hesitate to call "belly-bump." We might each choose our own special war

## Real Victorians at School

cry for the obligatory warning shout, with the sole proviso that it must be of some language other than English. Edie chose for herself "Honi soit qui mal y pense," which perhaps was not inappropriate under the circumstances. Gertrude Horsford's cry was "Veni, vidi, vici!" Another, I think it was Annie, had taken the old knightly ballad, sung to the oldest tune in the world, "Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre, Mironton ton-ton-Mirontaine" (twenty years before the ballad was popularized by Du Maurier in "Trilby"). My war cry was Greek, suggested by the name of my sled, "Falcon." For the Falcon was associated with hunting and the goddess of the chase, Diana. So I took the shout of the worshipers of Diana at Ephesus, which my father had taught me to say in Greek. "Megale he Artemis he ton Ephesion." What a wonderful picture Father had drawn to me of that scene from the Acts of the Apostles. The thought of the maddened crowds swaying and shouting in defense of their goddess

## An Echo from Parnassus

thrilled me through and through, and the rhythmic swing of the Greek words seemed to fit with the bounding of my swift Falcon over the banks.

Charley Longfellow's adventurous spirit had taken him up to Canada for the winter sports in days when Canada was almost unknown ground, and such a thing as organized winter sports undreamed of with us. He had brought back for his sisters and their young friends a number of Indian snowshoes, buckskin moccasins and leggings, the long toboggans and—a complete novelty to us—several pairs of the Norwegian “ski.” We had some difficulty and many ludicrous mishaps learning to manage these latter, but they interested me greatly as they explained a point that had puzzled me in La Motte Fouqué's story of “Sintram.” The English translation I was reading represented Sintram and his companions as gliding over the surface of deep snow and taking wonderful leaps on “skates.” Such feats would be impossible for the skates we

## Real Victorians at School

knew with steel runners, or for Indian snow-shoes. But the first sight of skis made it plain that the translator was at fault for lack of an English word to describe these gliding snow-planes. We never became very expert on them, however, and preferred our first loves—sleds, and the many uses they could be put to, coasting, “hitching” to passing sleighs (not so dangerous as it sounds, as there was little traffic and no child-killing speed problem in those days), bobsledding, and races over level ice and snow, seated on the sleds and propelling them with pickers.

We did not drive motor cars, as there were none in existence, but were eager to drive horses and at an early age learned to harness them. Those of us who lived near the water in summer learned to swim and to row. The Horsfords who summered at Shelter Island, where the sailing is good, not only were excellent swimmers, but could sail a boat as skillfully as any boys of their age. At Manchester-by-the-Sea, where my grandfather had the first summer residence built

## An Echo from Parnassus

on that shore, we had a beautiful beach and fine surf bathing, but no facilities for sailing. My father, who had been in the Sandwich Islands, taught us to ride the surf with planks like the Kanakas. The young daughters of our neighbors, the Townes, at Eagle Head, having no beach, became expert at diving from the rocks directly into deep water, and could do all kinds of trick swimming impossible in surf bathing. The Longfellows, who spent their summers at Nahant, had no very good beach, but a fine harbor for boating and yachting. Thus each, according to our facilities, entered into the sports of the day. No one held us back. No "Victorian blight" fell on our young activities. In fact, our elders encouraged and even initiated us in them. My father's elder sister, my fifty-year-old spinster aunt Charlotte, an intellectually brilliant and accomplished woman, was an adventurous mountain climber and daring horsewoman. She could row and swim with the best of us. Nothing daunted her. At eighty-four years of age

## Real Victorians at School

she was one of the first women in Boston to go out automobiling. Had airplanes then been invented, she would have been one of the first to fly! Yet she was brought up in Puritanism, and sixty years of her life were spent under the imagined suppressions of Victorianism! But the Victorian spirit was strong and enterprising. It was Science that lagged behind and withheld in her lifetime the opportunities she would have boldly grasped.

## CHAPTER VII

### “DOORS LEFT UNGUARDED”

CRAIGIE HOUSE is so widely known, so often pictured, as the home of the poet Longfellow and the Cambridge Headquarters of General Washington, after he first took command of the American Continental army in New England on July 3, 1775, that it hardly seems necessary to give any description of it. Yet, though its outside features are probably familiar to all from photographs and illustrations, its interior features are rarely seen, as it is still the home of the poet's oldest daughter, Miss Alice Longfellow, and all its rooms, except Mr. Longfellow's study, are in daily use. This is carefully preserved in almost exactly the state in which he left it and is open to the public once a week. The

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

entrance hall, the fine Colonial staircase and the study itself are thus frequently visited as a shrine by fervent pilgrims. But the noble library, the delightful old paneled dining room, the charming Colonial parlor, and the statue gallery are known only to the fortunate few who come as friends of the family or bringing letters of introduction to their hospitality.

The “study” is at the right as one enters the front hall—a large, square, paneled room painted white, with high carved chimney piece and tiled, open fireplace—the dark, richly carved bookcases and furniture in strong contrast. As in all the rooms the windows are set deeply in the thick walls with roomy, cushioned window seats, and inside wooden shutters painted white. The cushions and the long curtains covering the deep recesses of the study windows were of “Turkey red,” with border of black velvet. Two windows face south, overlooking the terrace and Brattle Street, across the fields —now “Longfellow Park”—and the Charles

## An Echo from Parnassus

River, to what were in the old days the salt marshes of the tidal river, but, presented by Mr. Longfellow to Harvard College, now frame the athletic grounds of Soldiers' Field. The other windows face the east and look over the side lawn with its shrubberies and belt of tall shade trees. Here the young Longfellows and their friends, and later a generation of Danas and Thorps—the children of "Edith" and "Allegra"—have had their garden parties, open-air theatricals and dances on the green. In the sixties, when I was a child, it was the setting for croquet and archery.

Mr. Longfellow's upright desk stood at the further, south window of the study. Behind the desk there is a tall "grandfather's clock," but neither this clock nor the very elaborate chiming one on the landing of the fine stairway is, as many have supposed, the original of the "Old Clock on the Stairs." That stood in the Plunkett Mansion at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, once the home of Mrs. Longfellow's ancestors. Like most of the

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

men of that period, he wrote at his high desk, standing. My father also stood while writing, and even to a very advanced age my grandfather used his high desk in preference to an armchair and writing table. Men also frequently stood up to read. How often have I seen Mr. Longfellow or my father, or the friends who were at home in their libraries—Lowell, Sumner, Appleton, Fields—take down a book from the study shelves, and, crossing over to the window, stand there reading page after page without thought of discomfort or fatigue. Frequently, too, they stood as they gathered in groups before the open fire, or to smoke their after-dinner cigars. But the men of those New England days were more on their feet than our men of this age, not alone standing to work or converse, but also doing much of their thinking, or planning, or daydreaming on their feet, in long afternoon rambles in and out of Boston or about its lovely sylvan suburbs.

I cannot leave the “study” without mention of its doors—

## An Echo from Parnassus

“By three doors left unguarded  
They enter my castle wall—”

In all the five years in which the Craigie House was almost a second home to me, I must have passed the study doors many times a day, yet never once do I recall seeing them closed. Not wide open, but always “on the latch”—slightly ajar—two of the three doors, at least, leaving inviting cracks for the passer-by to peep in, and even to enter with a certain soft stepping confidence, if one was of the household.

Mr. Robert Ferguson, English M. P. for Carlisle, who was twice a visitor at Craigie House during our schooldays, writes to his family:

“Hardly would the picture of Longfellow in his study be complete without, ever and anon, through one of the ‘three doors left unguarded,’ a little figure stealing gently in, laying an arm round his neck as he bent over his work, and softly whispering some childish secret in his ear.”

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

Nor were these hospitable doors open only to the children and the family. The window at which Mr. Longfellow's desk stood commanded full view of the broad front walk leading from the Brattle Street gate, up the two short flights of stone steps of the terraces to the front door. Often, if the figure of friend or acquaintance came up this path we would see the poet leave his desk, go to the front door and open it himself, with outstretched hand of welcome to the approaching visitor. If he remained at his work, it would mean that the visitor was unknown to him, perhaps bringing a letter of introduction that would be taken in to the poet by the well-trained maid who answered the doorbell. Or it might be—was in fact only too likely to be—the personage to whom he alludes in the intimacy of his diary, half in amusement and half in dismay, as the Perfect Stranger:

“How they come and how they consume one's time! For the Perfect Stranger, as he

## An Echo from Parnassus

is fond of calling himself, always wants you to turn his grindstone. A charming essay might be written on 'The Perfect Stranger.'"

This willingness to endure interruptions, to sacrifice time and thought to others—this unwillingness to shut out human relationships, however insignificant or time-consuming is, needless to say, far from characteristic of writers in general.

Holy Writ has said, "He that could have transgressed and hath not transgressed, that could do evil and hath not done it,—who is he and we will praise him? for he hath done wonderful things in his life." So may we, perhaps, praise the man who might have been slothful and hath been diligent—a man of ample means and retiring nature, with all the tastes and resources that would make a life of leisure attractive, and yet devoted his days to tireless industry in creative work.

For Longfellow, so prodigal of his time, of his hospitality and privacy, was, yet, more scholarly, more widely cultured in the litera-

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

ture of many lands and languages, broader in scope of general interests than any among our American writers of poetic or imaginative literature—an indefatigable student, exact and diligent in research.

This is an aspect of Longfellow which his modern critics either know nothing of or deliberately ignore. His very friendships prove the breadth and variety of his sympathies and knowledge. His friends—who sought him out and spent hours in converse with him for the sake of his rare understanding—were widely different in their nature and pursuits. As they came and went we saw among them statesmen, philanthropists, explorers, historians, philosophers, painters, actors, musicians, political refugees from other lands, the Abolitionists of our own land, etc.

He was also an active and a busy man in practical affairs, an early riser, quick stepping, alert in bearing, attentive to his many responsibilities. He made his own business arrangements with his publishers,

## An Echo from Parnassus

he managed the financial affairs of his family, as guardian to his children and trustee of the estate left them by their mother. Like many of the gentlemen of that period he went daily to market, providing for the household needs. Himself a light eater, a believer in a simple and almost meatless diet, he nevertheless was a connoisseur in the choicest cuts, the game and fish in season, the finest wines and fruits, and was a skillful carver. His voluminous correspondence alone would have taken the whole time of an industrious secretary. But Mr. Longfellow had no secretary, nor stenographer. It was before the days of typewriters, and every line of his letters, of his business correspondence and of his literary work was written out at length in his own firm, clear, legible handwriting. The mere sight of the Longfellow papers, correspondence and manuscripts preserved in fireproof vaults in Craigie House, fills one with amazement, and with profound respect for the industry and energy involved.

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

And even in his own vocational work, what hours often were spent in study and research before a line of verse was put to paper! The vague, general idea the public is apt to hold of a poet as an indolent dreamer with an ear for rhythm, who hears a romantic and fanciful story and passes pleasant hours “in slippers ease,” to quote a recent critic, idly casting it into agreeable jingles—such an idea is something we must throw entirely out of our minds in connection with the work of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Varied and thorough scholarship along unusual lines, the hardihood of the pioneer, the daring of the experimenter putting his invention on the market, are all involved in the publication of such works as “Hiawatha,” “Evangeline,” and the “Courtship of Miles Standish.”

The younger writers and critics of to-day are inclined to base his reputation chiefly on his European culture, and seem not to realize the amount of sheer pioneer work done by him in American history and legend.

## An Echo from Parnassus

Three generations now have spouted “Paul Revere’s Ride,” but before Longfellow published his poem, who in the length and breadth of the land knew of Paul Revere? Few were those who knew even of Concord and Lexington. The centennials and sesquicentennials of the past sixty years, the Mayflower and Historical Societies, the volumes of Parkman and Fiske, the patriotic Societies of Colonial Wars and Colonial Dames, and Sons and Daughters of the Revolution, with their tablets and their relics, their cult of historic monuments and pageants had no existence when Longfellow gave to the world his poetic narratives of early French colonization and British rule, of Indian life and warfare, legend and folk-lore, of Franciscan missionaries and explorers. The creation had meant years of patient delving in old Canadian-French “Annales” and “Relations,” in endless correspondence with Canadian scholars and a few American research workers, and steeping himself in the traditions of Indian races that had no writ-

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

ten tongue, no record of events or dates, no verbal expression of their own life and consciousness. These tales broke the paths that opened up a whole new world of adventure and fascination. Even the meter of “Hiawatha” was a novelty, a bold experiment, rousing the liveliest controversies.

The first to sing of the Mayflower Pilgrims was not an American, but a British lyrical poet, and a woman at that. Felicia Hemans’ “Landing of the Pilgrims” is spirited and worthy of high praise, but is woefully inexact in its setting and description. It is no excuse to say that she had not seen and did not know the low and sandy coast of Plymouth. Mr. Longfellow never visited the Evangeline country, and wrote of it before the days when kodaks and travel magazines and Burton Holmes lectures had made it easy to visualize the aspect of far-off lands. Yet by dint of close reading of old French “Relations” and British Colonial records and narratives he had formed in his mind’s eye an absolutely correct picture of

## An Echo from Parnassus

the regions adjoining the Bay of Fundy, of Acadie, the Basin of Minas and old Blomidon. So much so that when, in 1877, with my father, then Counsel for the United States in the Fisheries Arbitration of that summer at Halifax, I visited Annapolis, Wolfville and “the Evangeline region” of Nova Scotia, every feature of the scenery—the fields and orchards of Grand Pré, the tidal rivers and salt marshes where the cattle graze, the long stretches of sand, exposed by the abnormally low tides, the fishing and trading boats left by the ebbing seas lying on their sides in mud banks forty-seven feet above low-water level, the long ranges of hills topped by gaunt old Blomidon with his head in the clouds, the incoming roar of the returning tides—a great rushing wall of water—all stood out clearly in familiar detail. Only the forest primeval and the old French farms had long since disappeared.

On our return from “Acadie” my father wrote Mr. Longfellow as follows:

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

“HALIFAX, N. S., SEPT. 18, 1877.

“MY DEAR LONGFELLOW:

“Mrs. Dana, Henrietta and I have just returned from a delightful trip to what is now known as the ‘Evangeline country’ and to Annapolis, and we all desire to thank you for having thrown such a charm around this beautiful region.

“You have given to Nova Scotia her only classic ground. You have done for it what Scott had done for *Loch Katrine*, and Burns for the *Doon* and *Alloway*. It will not be long before Cook will be offering to take parties to it.

“We went to Grand Pré and wandered about, and saw the spots which the people have identified as the sites of the chapel and the blacksmith’s forge, and cut two little sprigs of willow from the tree next the blacksmith’s shop, from which the guide, whom we saw, had sent you a cane.

“You can hardly know how truly and deeply you are beloved and honored here. Mr. Haliburton said, ‘If he should come here there would be a gathering of clans, I can tell you, which would surprise him.’

“I was repeatedly asked to urge upon you to visit this region, with profuse, yet sincere

## An Echo from Parnassus

offerings of all kinds of attention. I am sure you would be greatly pleased by the scenes, and the interest you would find among the people. If more agreeable to you, and your stay is short, your visit can be made private and you will get rid of all formal and ceremonial inflictions.

“Believe me, faithfully yours,

“RICHARD H. DANA, JR.”

Just ten years prior to this, in the summer of 1867, we had had the pleasure of giving Mr. Longfellow his first view of the “Reef of Norman’s Woe,” the scene of his “Wreck of the *Hesperus*,” published some years earlier. He had sailed over from Nahant to my grandfather’s summer home at Manchester-by-the-Sea, with his brother-in-law, Mr. Thomas Gold Appleton, and a few friends in the yacht *Alice*, bringing the little girls, Edith and Annie, to make us a visit of a few days. The whole party on the yacht dined with us at the two o’clock dinner then customary in summer, and we sat down twenty-two at table. After dinner

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

there was just time to drive four miles to Norman’s Woe, off the entrance of Gloucester harbor, and the section of Manchester known as “Magnolia” but then called “Kettle Cove,” to see the fishing fleet lying at anchor in the offing—and return to Dana Beach before they must sail back to Nahant. The *Alice* was the yacht, a twenty-seven ton sloop, in which three adventurous youths—Charles Longfellow, Arthur Clark—for many years the popular captain of the American liner *Philadelphia*—and Harry Stanfield—had crossed the Atlantic the previous year. The announcement of their safe arrival after a nineteen days’ voyage was the first private message sent over the newly laid Atlantic cable, July, 1866.

We were disappointed in our hope of giving Mr. Longfellow his first view of Acadie, for he was not well enough to leave home in the autumn of 1877.

What I have said of the marvelous fidelity of his descriptions of the Evangeline country is equally true of those of Hia-

## An Echo from Parnassus

watha's hunting grounds. In the first fifteen years of my married life, when we were living in the then modest and pretty provincial town of Detroit, with its outlying French farms, its markets and churches where French was still spoken, and its two-hundred-year-old aristocracy, as proud of their French descent as the Brahmins of Boston and Salem of their Puritan stock——my husband and I spent many summers along the Canadian shores of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, or the American shores of Lake Superior and the Upper Peninsula. From Penatanguishene at the lower end of Georgian Bay, threading its 30,000 islands to Sault Sainte Marie or Michilimackinac, and beyond to Traverse Bay and Charlevoix we were in the heart of the Huron country, the stage-setting of "Hiawatha." So vividly had the poet absorbed and transmitted the atmosphere and character of the scenery that we seemed to see nothing but the stealthy figures of Indian huntsmen and warriors, of slender copper-colored maidens, of trappers

## “Doors Left Unguarded”

and *coureurs de bois* gliding among its trees and rocks, or driving their canoes in and out among the labyrinth of islands. The steamboats of the Great Lakes, the smaller craft of the island ferries, the distant shriek of trains, the summer hotels and cottages and houseboats all faded away into the unreal, and only the figures from the past were true and living.

Tolstoy, in defining “Art” has said:

“Art is that which *infects* with sympathetic feelings. If a man is infected by the author’s condition of soul, if he feel this emotion and this union with others, then the object which has effected this is Art.”

So long, then, as one generation after another continues to feel its first responsive stirrings to adventure and romance, its first yearnings for poetry and culture from Longfellow’s lines—so long as tears still fall for the death of Minnehaha, as we sigh with exiled Evangeline and smile with arch Priscilla, as long as there are youthful hearts

## An Echo from Parnassus

that thrill to the hoof-beats of Paul Revere's steed, and youthful imaginations are still fired by the Building of the Ship and the Saga of King Olaf, while older faces smile tenderly at the picture of the "blue-eyed banditti" stealing into their Daddy's stronghold—so long, if Tolstoy is right, is Longfellow's place in Art secure against all cavillers.

The great poet among musicians, Beethoven, has written in the margin of his noblest composition, the "Missa Solemnis," these words: "*It came from the heart,—may it reach the heart!*" How justly such words might have been penned by him whose poetry is music!

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CASE OF ANTHONY BURNS

#### I. THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW

**I**N our dining room in Cambridge there stood on the sideboard, in its handsome leather, velvet-lined frame, a beautifully engraved and embossed salver of solid silver, bearing this inscription:

To  
RICHARD H. DANA, JR.  
for his  
Manly and gratuitous defense  
of the  
Unalienable rights  
of  
Anthony Burns  
who was  
Kidnapped at Boston, May 24th  
and doomed to eternal bondage, June 2nd,  
1854  
From a few of his fellow-citizens.

## An Echo from Parnassus

Accompanying this presentation of plate to my father were letters signed by Robert E. Apthorp, head of the Vigilance Committee of Boston, and by Wendell Phillips, Chairman of its Executive Committee.

In the early, childish days when I still stumbled over words of more than three syllables, I would climb upon a chair, and spell out the inscription with eager interest and curiosity, asking myself the while, as no doubt my readers are doing now, "Who was Anthony Burns?"

Perhaps my father's words, written at the time in the intimacy of his journal, will best show the setting of this famous case:

"Who can tell what are the things and which are the men that are to move the world? An obscure man, one of several millions of obscure men,—and in a day his name is telegraphed all over the Union, millions await the decision of his fate in anxious suspense, riots and bloodshed occur, the heart of the nation is aroused. Over his body is the great struggle between the moral sense

## The Case of Anthony Burns

of a people and the written law backed by armed power. The eyes of a nation are on the scene of his agony and trial—half a nation is triumphant and half a nation is humiliated as the scale is turned. He is a hero, a martyr, with crowds of the learned and the intelligent of a civilized community listening to his words. Who can tell what a day may bring forth!"

My father's Boston law offices overlooked the large colonnaded Court House, fronting on Court Square. The Court House belonged to the State of Massachusetts and contained the various State Courts—Supreme, Common, Pleas, Justices and Police Courts. A part of the building was, however, leased to the Federal Government for one of its inferior tribunals and for the use of the U. S. Marshal and other Federal officers and employees. It seemed to my childish eyes a most imposing edifice with its pilastered portico and broad flight of stone steps the entire width of the front leading down to Court Square. On one of my earliest

## An Echo from Parnassus

visits to his offices Father had taken me to a window and said: "It was at that small side door that Wentworth Higginson and Dr. Howe forced an entrance in their attempt to rescue Anthony Burns."

Anthony Burns! the mystery man! I knew all about the great and good Dr. Howe. Colonel Higginson, brilliant young clergyman and writer, a tall, gallant figure of a man with a score of daring deeds to his credit, was also familiar to me. He was now leading a negro regiment in the war. But—Anthony Burns! Here was my chance to find out.

"Papa, who was Anthony Burns? And were you with Dr. Howe and Col. Higginson when he was rescued?"

"No, dear, I was counsel for the defense at Burns' trial, but we lost the case. The attempt at rescue was a failure and poor Burns was sent back into slavery."

"Oh, but, Papa, *why?* It seems so dreadful. Why wasn't it a success? Why didn't you win the case? Why did he have to go

## The Case of Anthony Burns

back? Why couldn't he stay in our free state?"

"Because of the law—a law against which there was no appeal—called the 'Fugitive Slave Law.' It was an Act of Congress which obliged all the free states of the Union to return to their Southern owners any fugitive slaves who might take refuge up here. Do you know what 'fugitive' means?"

"Oh, yes! It means 'runaway,' like Eliza and George Harris in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' I've got to where they are befriended by the Kentucky farmers and by the Quakers and get safely on board the Sandusky boat for Canada. And I've read in the second volume as far as Topsy, and where little Eva dies. But now the second volume is lost, I can't find it anywhere, and I do so want to know whether George Shelby remembered, when he grew up, to find Uncle Tom and buy him back."

I suspect that Father and Mother knew something about the mysterious disappearance of that second volume. It was rather

## An Echo from Parnassus

strong meat for a child scarcely eight years old, with its lurid stories of Cassie and Le-  
geree, and the martyrdom of poor Uncle Tom. I could not have understood all of it, but there would have been enough to distress and puzzle me and make me very unhappy. For the book was very real to our family, its author having been one of our mother's close friends at school, and one whom we all had seen and loved.

In Mother's youth, the most famous girls' school in the North had been that of Miss Catherine Beecher at Hartford, Connecticut. It was a school much patronized by wealthy Southerners, who sent their daughters to the schools of the North for the advantages of higher education. Mother made many friends among these Southern girls and the friendship survived many years of separation and the Civil War, to be renewed in later life. But Mother's dearest friend of all was Harriet Beecher, a young teacher in her Aunt Catherine's school. She was a lively, witty, brilliant young girl, two or

## The Case of Anthony Burns

three years older than Mother, and was the daughter of a famous clergyman and lecturer of that period, Dr. Lyman Beecher.

Harriet Beecher was, as well, the sister of Henry Ward Beecher, who was to become even more celebrated than his father. A still wider—a world-wide fame—awaited the merry, bright-eyed young slip of a school-teacher. But long, hard years of her early married life at Mr. Stowe's pastorate in Tennessee—years of poverty, illness and far separations from friends, soon made a frail, heavy-burdened little woman of her, though they could not quench the strong, humorous Beecher spirit within, which at every chance bobbed up above the wreckage of daily toil, anxiety and sorrow. Then, amid the surroundings of Mr. Stowe's ministry in those southwestern states bordering on the slave states of the South, there came to her the inspiration to write of the things she saw and heard about her, of the things she knew and proved to be true, and to show

## An Echo from Parnassus

to the world the sidelights of slavery—the good with the bad, the amusing with the terrible, the attractive with the heart-breaking. Later, in the distant coldness of their next home in the interior of Maine, the busy, careworn little wife and mother wrote in the silent night hours when her little household slept. Often on her knees, with smiles and tears, prayers and racking sobs, the Great American Novel—perhaps, with all its many faults the greatest novel of all time—was finished and given to the world. And “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” became the most epoch-making book of its century.

Anthony Burns, then, was a fugitive slave, and like George Harris, an educated and attractive one, Father said. Burns, too, had met friends and defenders at the North, though in his case a terrible law blocked their way, and they were helpless to serve.

“But, Father, those must have been cruel, dreadful men that passed such a wicked law. Why weren’t there enough good ones to prevent its being done?”

## The Case of Anthony Burns

“Because, dear, even many great and good men thought for a while that such a law was needed to save the country. They did not like it, but thought it a necessary compromise with the great slave-holding states of the South to prevent secession, or the extension of slavery to the new western states—necessary even to prevent a possible civil war. The law was drawn up by a Southern slave-holder, Mr. Henry Clay, but it was supported by some of the finest men in the North. Our own Mr. Daniel Webster—you have heard me speak of him as a great orator and one of our greatest public men—approved of the bill, and led his friends and followers to support it. You remember my dear friend, Mr. William Evarts, who has often visited at our house. You know how kind and pleasant he is. Yet he, too, thought the law was a wise measure, and that Mr. Webster was our greatest statesman. He hoped he would be our next president.”

“But you did not think so, Papa?”

“They were mistaken, dear, and they soon

## An Echo from Parnassus

came to know it. It probably hastened Mr. Webster's death, for he died three years after the law was passed, a broken-hearted man. The law had failed. It had served only to inflame feeling where he had hoped it would soothe. It had brought not peace but a sword. It had estranged his best friends from him."

Much of the history of the Fugitive Slave Law was told me later, when I was older and could understand it better. Three generations have grown up since that day in 1850 when this Act of Congress was passed, and our present age will hardly believe that slavery was then the public law of one half of the Republic, that the original six slave states had grown to fifteen, that Washington, the national capital, was slave soil, with slave markets and slave jails. Of the presidential terms since the institution of our government the South had held thirteen, the North only six. It may be said that the slave power ruled all in politics. It ruled the Army and the Navy, West Point and An-

## The Case of Anthony Burns

napolis. Our embassies and consulates all over the world were either advocates of slavery or silent servants of the slave power. My father, traveling round the world in 1859-60, reported that in none of the consular offices could an anti-slavery newspaper be found and that any consul subscribing to the *New York Tribune* or the *Evening Post* was liable to removal.

In Congress, the South was maneuvering for the extension of slavery to the territories and newly entering states of the West. Then in the summer of 1850, Henry Clay sponsored a Compromise Act which contained the "Fugitive Slave Law"—an Act which brought the slave hunters into the free states of the North and West, depriving their colored population of the assurances of freedom they had hitherto enjoyed. The Act would override all State laws, the rights of jury trial and habeas corpus which the States guaranteed to both white and colored alike.

There were many jurists and public men of the North and West who believed such an

## An Echo from Parnassus

Act of Congress to be unconstitutional, an invasion of “States Rights.” But who was to bring up this question for decision before a biased Supreme Court? It is hardly credible to-day that the South had for sixty-three successive years held the Chief Justiceship of the United States Supreme Court, and that until the Civil War there was not an hour since the adoption of the Constitution when a majority of the Justices of the Supreme Court were not slave-holders. Besides the doubt of an unbiased opinion, opposition was weakened by the fact that the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law had been supported by several of the greatest jurists of the North—by Daniel Webster, Rufus Choate, William M. Evarts, Judge Benjamin R. Curtis and Edward Everett, all legal authorities, orators, names to conjure with.

In 1850 the Republican party had not yet come into existence. Its predecessor, the Whig party, was broken up into many groups. There were the “Compromise” or Webster Whigs, and the conservative element

## The Case of Anthony Burns

of merchants and manufacturers—financial pillars of the state, known as the “Cotton Whigs,” and led by Nathan Appleton, Abbott Lawrence and other owners of the great cotton mills of New England. In the eyes of these men slave labor appeared to be an economic necessity for the South, and so indirectly for the cotton mills and industries of the North. In this group were also such social leaders and literary lights as the Ticknors, Eliots, Prescotts, Lowells, Curtises, Winthrops, etc.

In opposition were the extreme Abolitionists led by Theodore Parker, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Dr. Samuel G. Howe, the philanthropist, Horace Mann, the educator. Among the more conservative anti-slavery men were the leaders of the “Free-Soil Whigs”—and the anti-slavery Democrats—such men as Charles Francis Adams, son of one President and grandson of another, old Mr. Edmund Quincy, patriot and descendant of patriots; John G. Palfrey,

## An Echo from Parnassus

the historian of New England; Samuel Hoar of Concord and his sons (later well-known as Judge Rockwood Hoar and U. S. Senator George Hoar); Henry Wilson, Ellis A. Loring, and Charles Sumner.

These men all, except Wilson, were of what Dr. Holmes calls “the Brahmin caste of Boston” and Mr. Howells named “the Boston patriciate.” Among passionate supporters of the anti-slavery cause were the eminent poets and writers of the Boston, Cambridge and Concord circles—James Russell Lowell, John G. Whittier, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Sumner’s warm friend, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Roused by the thought of human beings, living in their own free State, being hurled back into slavery under a doubtful form of law, without opportunity to defend themselves, they blazed into tongues of flame. Webster had once been their idol, but after his support of the obnoxious law they now looked upon him as a traitor. Even the gentle Emerson was moved to say, when Webster fell from

## The Case of Anthony Burns

grace, "Every drop of blood in that man's veins has eyes that look downward."

Thus political parties were disrupted, families were divided, friendships were broken up, younger men like my father and Charles Sumner who had been well received were ostracized. Peaceful scholars, clergymen, and philanthropists became radicals and leaders of mobs. They saw no hope of redress through constitutional measures or political parties. It was the South itself that dug the grave of the Fugitive Slave Law.

A few seizures and renditions were made in the West, but the South was desirous above all to establish a precedent in Boston, the stronghold of Abolitionists and Free Soilers, the home of Garrison and Phillips, of Parker and Sumner. For many months, however, nothing happened in Massachusetts. Its large colored population took courage, their apprehensions were almost wholly quieted when, on February 15th, 1851, it was learned that the new law was

## An Echo from Parnassus

about to be vindicated. An arrest had been made, a fugitive was in the custody of the United States Marshal and was to be taken back to slavery from Massachusetts soil. This first case was that of the slave "Shadrach," alias Frederick Jenkins.

The arrest was so sudden, so unexpected, the city was slow to hear of it. But as the news spread there was great excitement. My father, always ready to defend the oppressed, was notified by the Vigilance Committee of anti-slavery men and had at once crossed over to the Court House, where the United States Marshal had his office, to arrange for a defense. It was a hopeless case from the first. The requirements of the Federal Law were few and had been quickly met. The alleged fugitive had been taken before the Commissioner, Mr. George T. Curtis, identified by two of the owner's witnesses, and the fact of his escape attested by his owner's agents. The Commissioner had no option but to find him guilty as charged

## The Case of Anthony Burns

and to order him restored to his former owner. So simple was the machinery of the new law.

Father then petitioned Chief Justice Shaw, of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, for a writ of habeas corpus under the State law, but obtained no satisfaction. (As he afterwards said, "The conduct of the Chief Justice, his evident disinclination to act, the frivolous nature of his objections and his insulting manner to me, troubled me more than any other manifestations.") The best that could be done for the moment was to ask the Commissioner for a delay, which was granted from that day, Saturday, till the following Tuesday morning.

Father returned to his office to plan with friends the possible next proceedings. His law offices on Court Street commanded, as I have said, a full view of the Court House where the Commissioner's Court was still sitting. A sudden shout was heard and all rushed to the windows. The shout became a yell of triumph as two big powerful negroes

## An Echo from Parnassus

dashed down the Court House steps, dragging the prisoner between them, his clothes half torn from his back, through Court Square and off toward Cambridge, "like a black squall," Father said, "a crowd driving along with them and cheering as they went." It was all done with incredible quickness; there was no time for arrest and pursuit.

The sympathy of the crowd in the Square was wholly with the rescuers. Much amusement was caused at the sight of an old negro running off with the Sword of Justice that had been ostentatiously placed upon the United States Marshal's desk during the "trial." There being no longer any safety for fugitives in Massachusetts, Shadrach must be hurried up to Canada. Telegrams were sent by the police to stop all trains at the State line. But Shadrach, now in charge of the "underground railway," as the Abolitionist rescuers were called, was removed by them from the train at a stop before the State line was reached and driven in a sleigh over the border and beyond the jurisdiction

## The Case of Anthony Burns

of Massachusetts. There he was put on a train for Canada and safety. So ended the first attempt at rendition.

The aftermath during the following summer was the famous "Rescue Cases." A number of men credited with having a hand in the kidnaping of Shadrach were arrested and tried separately—Scot, Elizur Wright, Morris, Lewis Hayden and others, all jury trials, under the State laws. All failed of conviction in spite of strong evidence, through disagreement of the juries. Sometimes they stood six to six, sometimes, as in the Wright case, one single obstinate juryman held up the jury and prevented conviction.

Mr. John Hale of New Hampshire and my father defended the first two cases, and Father took the remaining cases alone. Some months later, when giving a lecture in a New Hampshire town, he was accosted by a man of the plain farmer type. "I wonder if you remember me, Mr. Dana?" he asked. Father looked him over and said, "I think

## An Echo from Parnassus

you were the obstinate juryman in the Elizur Wright Rescue Case." The man chuckled, "What you don't know, Mr. Dana, is that I was the man who *drove Shadrach over the State line.*" For with all the pains the United States Marshal and the police had been at to pack the jury with men who would stand for conviction, they had allowed to slip in the one man who had run the prisoner out of their jurisdiction!

My father's feeling in the matter of the rescue was, in his own words, "If the law was constitutional—which I firmly believe it is not—it would be the duty of a citizen not to resist it by force. But how can any right-minded man do else than rejoice in the escape of a victim of an unjust law, the rescue of a man from the hopeless, endless slavery to which a recovered fugitive is always doomed?"

In April, 1851, a second, more successful attempt was made by the South. A colored waiter named Sims at a Boston hotel was suddenly arrested at his work by the United

## The Case of Anthony Burns

States Marshal and his posse, locked up in the Court House, and a chain drawn outside the building under which even the judges had to crawl to enter. A huge force of police was stationed on every side. This time there should be no rescue, and the State's Temple of Justice was converted into a Federal slave pen. Thus began the famous "Sims Case," resulting in the election of Charles Sumner to the United States Senate, to lead the mighty struggle against the extension of slavery.

As in the Shadrach case, the Sims case was taken before the Commissioner, George T. Curtis. Mr. Sewall applied to the Supreme Court for a writ of habeas corpus, and it was refused without argument. He asked leave to address the court in favor of the petition and was again refused. Mr. Charles G. Loring, Mr. Franklin Dexter and other leading citizens spoke privately to the judges and it was agreed that Mr. Dana and Mr. Robert Rantoul should be heard for

## An Echo from Parnassus

the defense on Monday morning, April 7th, before Chief Justice Shaw. Mr. Shaw then gave the opinion of the court refusing the writ on the ground that a conflict between the State Courts and the Federal Courts should be avoided. The question of the constitutionality was then brought up and argued both by the defense lawyers and by the agent for the owner. This argument had to be made before the Commissioner, the very man sitting on the case. Mr. Curtis upheld his own jurisdiction under the Federal Law and directed the United States Marshal to accompany the prisoner to Georgia and there deliver him up to his master.

The proceedings took up a whole week, an extraordinary number of prominent men being drawn into it on both sides, for legal opinion and advice—Judge Sprague, Judge Woodbury, Judge B. R. Curtis, Rufus Choate, Charles Sumner, and Charles Devens, later United States Attorney-General in the Hayes administration. A great meeting

## The Case of Anthony Burns

of protest was held at Tremont Temple, Horace Mann presiding, with many brilliant speakers and letters read from William H. Seward and C. F. Adams. The State law was appealed to, and a thousand men were prepared to go to the death for it and eagerly offered themselves for the Sheriff's posse. But the leaders were against force.

My father always referred to the Sims case as "the case of a poor slave, so touching to humanity, so great as a question of constitutional and political law."

On Saturday, April 12th, long before dawn, poor Sims, trembling and tearful, was marched on board a vessel, escorted by a hundred city police under the United States Marshal, armed with swords and pistols. In a few moments the vessel sailed and disappeared down the harbor. The South had triumphed. A precedent had been set. Massachusetts State officers had been turned into slave hunters, and the voice of the State law had been silenced by the slave power, now wholly in control of the Federal policy.

## An Echo from Parnassus

Twelve days later, April 24th, 1851, the mind of the liberty-loving voters declared itself in practical protest, and the Anti-Slavery leader, Charles Sumner, was elected to the United States Senate by the combined ballots of Free Soil Whigs, Abolitionists, and Anti-Slavery Democrats. There was great rejoicing throughout Massachusetts and particularly in Boston. A salute of 100 guns was fired on Boston Common, and all over New England bells were rung, guns were fired and houses illuminated. A procession formed in State Street and marched to Sumner's house, thence to the house of Charles Francis Adams, who made them a speech, and then to the house of R. H. Dana, Senior, in Chestnut Street, thinking that the younger Dana, Sims's counsel, lived there. The old poet came to the door and told them that his son lived not there but in Cambridge. As they turned away the crowd gave three hearty cheers for "the old gentleman, Mr. Dana's father."

The *Boston Daily Advertiser* next day is-

## The Case of Anthony Burns

sued a call to the business men of Boston to withdraw all business from Mr. Dana and proclaim nonintercourse—in short, as we should say to-day, to “boycott” him. Socially he, as well as Sumner and others, had already found many doors closed to them on Beacon Hill, but that could hardly injure them permanently. The business boycott, however, pressed heavily on a man still in his thirties, and dependent solely on his law practice for the support of wife and five children.

### II. THE RENDITION OF ANTHONY BURNS

The Fugitive Slave Law had been upheld, but the feeling grew that it was doomed to failure. It had served only to increase anti-slavery sentiment and activities throughout the Bay State and, indeed, all over the North and West. For three years the South took no more steps to enforce it, while the “Compromise Whigs” of the North, deprived of Webster’s leadership, hoped it would never again be pressed.

## An Echo from Parnassus

Then, on May 24th, 1854, like a bolt from a murky sky, word flashed round that once more a fugitive slave had been seized near Faneuil Hall, under the shadow of the "Cradle of Liberty," by warrant of a Massachusetts magistrate. A gang of six or seven men swept him off his feet and rushed him full speed through the middle of the streets, up the Court House steps to the United States Marshal's office. As Anthony Burns was the last fugitive ever seized on the soil of Massachusetts, every incident in his case has a definite historical interest.

Once more Father went over to the United States Court room to offer his services as counsel for the oppressed. He saw Burns, a young man of twenty-four, of considerable intelligence and force of mind, but appearing cowed and depressed. "They will swear to me and get me back," he said, "and I shall fare worse if I resist." Since his escape he had been employed in a furniture factory in Boston and had felt secure, but he now felt the case desperate. Father

## The Case of Anthony Burns

urged the hope of some flaw being found in the papers, and that it would cost him nothing and do no harm to try, but Burns feared that the trouble and expense his master would be put to if he resisted would be visited on him later. Father did not wish to press a defense on him, but asked the Court for a delay for further consideration. Judge Edward G. Loring of the Probate Court, who had issued the warrant for the arrest, talked kindly to Burns and granted a delay of two days.

Judge Loring was as humane and considerate as a man could be who felt it his official duty to execute such a law and be the instrument of sending a fellow being back into slavery. He professed to detest the law, yet followed the rigid construction that the courts had put upon it. He was firm, however, in allowing all reasonable delays, in spite of the objections of the claimant and his agents. The United States Marshal had refused to let Burns be seen or talked to by Wendell Phillips and the clergyman of the

## An Echo from Parnassus

colored church. But at Father's personal request Judge Loring instructed the Marshal that the prisoner had a right to see a reasonable number of friends if he desired, and they must not be refused admittance. So Phillips and the clergyman had a talk with Burns and he gave them power of attorney to act for him in the matter of counsel and defense. Phillips immediately engaged Father, who as before acted without fee, and I believe all concerned in the slave cases did the same.

The trial of Burns lasted from Monday the twenty-ninth of May till Friday, June 2nd. The court room was held by the "Marshal's Guard," a gang of one hundred and twenty toughs hired for the work and armed. The jailer reported that among them were forty-five who had been under his charge in the past. To reach the court room one had to pass three cordons of police and two of soldiers. There was also a special guard of Southern young men, students of Harvard College, who formed the bodyguard of Colo-

## The Case of Anthony Burns

nel Suttle, the owner of Anthony Burns.

Meanwhile it had become strongly evident that even the Whigs who had supported Webster in the Compromise Act had now had an entire change of heart. The very men who in 1850-53 had cut my father socially and withdrawn their business from him, now stopped him in the street and talked absolute treason. Amos Lawrence, a "Cotton Whig" and leading merchant of Boston, now came to Father and said that a number of them who had been Webster Whigs were determined to show the country that it was not Free Soilers and Abolitionists alone who were in favor of the liberation of Burns, but the former conservative "Compromise" men as well. If Dana would employ an eminent Whig as associate counsel, he was authorized to pay any retainer that might be demanded. Father consented and called upon Judge Fletcher and Rufus Choate as the most eminent Whig jurists available. Fletcher said his sympathies were with the defense, and if there should be a rescue he

## An Echo from Parnassus

would not lift a finger to prevent it, but that he was left no option to take the case. The interview with Choate was amusing. He said he would be glad to make an effort on the side of the defense, but that in the Sims case he had given written opinions against every point in the defense. "I filed my mind in 1851," he said. Dana suggested he might file his change of mind now, but Choate would not go against his record.

The trial of Burns did not pass without an attempt at rescue. On the evening of Friday, May 27th, there was a great meeting held at Faneuil Hall, violent in character, although Wendell Phillips who presided had implored them to wait for the final decision of the Commissioner before taking any resolutions and all the speakers had deprecated mob violence. It would be time enough to attempt a rescue if the decision was adverse. But there had been a secret plan of rescue kept very quiet to be carried out chiefly by men who lived outside of Boston. It was understood that a signal would be given at

## The Case of Anthony Burns

the Faneuil Hall meeting. The leaders of the rescue party were in this case really “of our best citizens”—a young Unitarian clergyman and writer of Worcester, Rev. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Martin Stowell also of Worcester, and the venerated philanthropist, Dr. S. G. Howe. Mr. Higginson did not attend the Faneuil Hall meeting, but was at Court Square directing the preparations when the signal was prematurely given. But the crowd at the Hall, not knowing the plan or understanding the signal, blocked the exits. The audience became ungovernable, the cry was raised “To the Court House! To the Court House!” and a few managed to work their way out of the Hall without leaders and made for Court Square. This brought about an ill-advised and ill-prepared attempt. Mr. Higginson and two or three other educated men, Harvard graduates, gallantly took the lead. A log was seized and a small door battered down. They entered, but encountered within a group of fifty guards armed with cut-

## An Echo from Parnassus

lasses. The crowds without weakly fell back, leaving their leaders alone. However ardent and courageous, what were four men against fifty? Higginson received a saber cut across the chin, the scar of which he bore to his dying day and the others were roughly handled and forced back into the street. Higginson stood on the steps, calling out to the crowd below, "You cowards! Would you desert us now?" A few responded feebly, but by the time Dr. Howe with Stowell and others arrived on the scene from Faneuil Hall, the police had already got among the crowd and carried off a number to the station house. Even then Dr. Howe made at least one attempt to gather his followers together, but the spirit had gone, the attack came to an end. After that any further attempts at a rescue were useless, for the marshal was now fully prepared and the Court House turned into a veritable fortress, while companies of artillery with field pieces lined the square outside.

After this attempt at rescue, Colonel

## The Case of Anthony Burns

Suttle and his counsel became apprehensive and opened negotiations with the defense for the sale of Burns, or rather, his emancipation for a price. The sum named was \$1,200 and the colored clergyman, Mr. Grimes, had actually secured the money and had the papers drawn up, when the United States Attorney interfered and broke off the negotiations. He had nothing to do with the case officially, for it was a private question of barter and sale. The Commissioner, Judge Loring, who was to try the case, did his utmost to have the sale negotiation carried out, but the United States Attorney insisted that the Federal law must be vindicated and Burns taken back to Virginia and delivered into the custody of his owner on slave soil. Colonel Suttle therefore dropped the negotiations and the trial was continued. Here, where caution and good sense and a liberal benevolence might have effected a compromise within the law, the slave-holding octopus reached forth and destroyed the good work. The case therefore went on

## An Echo from Parnassus

along the usual lines. Father was in court for five days, with Charles M. Ellis as his assistant. Every advantage was taken of every slip and technicality and there was the same history as in the Sims case of one judicial opinion after another favoring the Federal above the State law.

If Colonel Suttle's counsel had merely attested the facts of identity and escape as in the Sims case, there would have been no defense possible, except the question of the constitutionality of the law, which would of course be overruled. But the claimant tried to prove more than was necessary by this law. Thus witnesses showed that at the time of the alleged escape Burns had not worked for his master but was leased to another man and even Colonel Suttle's reversionary interest in him was mortgaged. This raised questions about the title and the fact of escape and even the identity. Father's argument for the defense before Judge Loring lasted three hours, taking brilliant advantage of the claimant's errors.

## The Case of Anthony Burns

Friday the decision was to be given. Excitement ran high not only in Boston but throughout New England and indeed throughout the Union. The mayor ordered out the entire military force, about 1,800 men. These troops and three companies of Regulars filled the streets and squares from the Court House to the wharf where lay the boat waiting to take Burns back to Virginia if remanded. Dana warned the Marshal that whether the prisoner was discharged or remanded he would give him his arm and escort him through the streets to liberty or to his doom.

On Friday morning, June 2nd, the Commissioner, Judge Loring gave his decision. He said that upon the evidence of the claimant's witnesses on the point of identity he would be obliged to discharge the prisoner. But the prisoner himself had admitted his identity on the night of his arrest and on his own admission he must accept the record and convict him.

The conviction was a grievous blow to all

## An Echo from Parnassus

his sympathizers, and to the poor prisoner who had thus inadvertently caused his own conviction. The Court was cleared of all but the prisoner and the Marshal's guard. Father and Mr. Grimes remained with the prisoner. They cheered him by telling him that money would be forwarded for his purchase as soon as he reached Virginia. They were expecting to go with him to the boat, just as counsel and spiritual adviser accompany a prisoner to execution. But they received word from the United States Marshal that it absolutely would not be allowed. So they could only shake hands and promise to remember Burns, for he feared brutal retaliation.

Father and Mr. Grimes walked to and fro in front of the Court House, until the procession moved with the prisoner. Every window the length of the route was filled, but the Square was cleared and lined with troops. There was deep apprehension of violence. Nearly all the shops were closed and heavily draped with black, and a huge coffin

## The Case of Anthony Burns

was suspended across State Street. All flags were hung union down. Soldiers and militia were posted the length of State and Court Streets to Long Wharf and for a block on all cross streets and lanes. They were all armed, guns loaded and capped and the officers carried revolvers. By great good fortune not a gun was fired by accident or design, for the consequences would have been immeasurable. The Marshal's guard formed a hollow square, each man armed with short sword and revolver. In the square walked the Marshal with Burns. A squadron of Light Horse rode before and behind the guard, dragging loaded field-pieces. They were greeted the length of the way with howls of "Shame," hoots and hisses. Father and Mr. Grimes followed the procession as far as Long Wharf and waited till the cutter was seen steaming out to sea with Burns, the Marshal, and Colonel Suttle and his party on board.

Later that evening, starting to walk home-ward with Mr. Auson Burlingame (after-

## An Echo from Parnassus

wards our minister to China), Mr. Dana was assaulted by two thugs of the Marshal's guard. One gave him a terrible blow over the right eye. The other, stationed on the left, expected to deal the finishing blow on that side. But the first staggering blow sent Dana reeling completely round so that instead of falling to the left as expected, he fell to the right, out into the street and escaped the second murderous blow—a narrow escape, for even the first blow was dangerously close to the temple and eye, striking on the cheek bone. The assailants fled and Dana was assisted into a near-by physician's office, and in three or four days had quite recovered.

The account of the arrest of one of his assailants, his escape, his tracking to New Orleans and recapture form a detective tale of extraordinary interest. But that is another story. Here we are interested only, as Father's opening words tell us, in the struggle between the moral sense of the people and the written law. And, as well,

## The Case of Anthony Burns

in the dilemma of a judiciary, bound by sense of duty to a law of doubtful constitutionality.

It can easily be imagined how thrilling it was for an eight-year-old child, living in the closing days of the Civil War, and deeply stirred by a first reading of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," to find out that right in her own State and city the very things she had read about had been going on scarcely a dozen years before, and that her own father, his friends and relations and social acquaintances whom she had seen and known, had taken their active part in such scenes. Succoring fugitives, underground-railroading, rescues, escapes, trackings, kidnapings and renditions into slavery had happened in Massachusetts, and were not confined to Kentucky and Tennessee; the North was not fighting for freedom and union in the South alone, but that they might be secured in the North as well. And the symbol and central figure of the cause in Massachusetts was

## An Echo from Parnassus

Anthony Burns, with my father standing at his side as his counsel and defense.

Charles Francis Adams, Jr., in writing of my father's connection with the fugitive slave cases, says:

"The man who holds that record in his hand may stand with head erect at the bar of final judgment itself. No occasion ever again arose for Dana to take his stand by the side of a hunted slave, but—'When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all His angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory . . . and say: Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me.'"

## CHAPTER IX

### PIGMIES AND GIANTS

**I**N the autumn of 1864 we were all agog over the re-election of Lincoln. The campaign, McClellan and Pendleton against Lincoln and Johnson, was at its height. My father had been among the first organizers of the new Republican party, but had been out of the country on a trip around the world for the benefit of his health at the time of Lincoln's first nomination and election to the presidency in 1860. The new young party had carried the Civil War through its early, crucial stages, to what in 1864 appeared like a nearing triumph, and enthusiasm ran high.

Now there were two things in life that my father never could resist—a fire and a drum and fife band. We were having supper at

## An Echo from Parnassus

my grandfather's in Chestnut Street one November evening, when, as night was settling down, we suddenly heard the distant steady beat and shrill whistle of a drum and fife band. That was too much for father. He sprang up and seized his hat, I after him, begging to be taken along. He grabbed me by the hand and we ran down the short hill at Spruce Street and across the path of the Common to Winter Street and struck, in full blast of cheering and enthusiasm, a *Democratic* torchlight procession! But, ardent Republicans though we were, when the band piped up the exhilarating strains of "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch," politics were thrown to the winds and for a good half-hour we tramped the maze of Boston's down-town streets in the van of a Democratic parade. Or rather, Father tramped them, carrying me perched on his shoulder, for at seven and a half a child could have seen nothing at street level and would have been in danger of rough jostling and injury under the feet of such a great crowd.

## Pigmies and Giants

My first impression of a torchlight procession at close quarters was a strong smell of oil lamps and the smoke, soot and flicker of the pine-knot torches. But such unpleasantnesses were all swallowed up in the excitement of the music, and the wonder of my first night view of lighted city streets and of a black, star-spangled sky. We sneaked home later to be jeered at by our good Republican household, and I was hustled off to bed to try and find sleep amid a riot of dreams.

Later in the campaign I can remember being taken with my sisters to a room in a down-town hotel to see a large, well-organized Republican procession on the eve of the election. Seen from a second-story window, a torchlight procession was far more picturesque than from street level. Looking down upon the moving masses of men and boys in their long dominos and hoods, with the flaring torches, the gay colored lanterns, floats, and illuminated transparencies with their mottoes and slogans, the blare of brass

## An Echo from Parnassus

bands, the crowds cheering and whistling, or shouting the choruses of popular war-songs, it was a picture to remain long in a child's memory.

But we children soon fell back into the gentle tenor of our pleasant school life, into which the echoes of war and politics scarcely penetrated. Certainly not at Craigie House, where Mr. Longfellow, though an ardent supporter of the Republican party which was to free the country from the curse of slavery, and a warm friend of Sumner and admirer of Lincoln, yet shrank from the details of a fraternal war and wished to keep its shadows from darkening his children's minds. In this, Miss Davie, being English and only interested in a remote, general way in the problems of the struggle, could easily second his wishes. We were, however, not kept in ignorance, but shown pictures of Lincoln's second inauguration in the illustrated papers of early March, 1865, and we were told in the early April days, of Lee's surrender and of peace, the assurance of Union and the liberty of the

## Pigmies and Giants

slaves. Then, in the midst of this relief and rejoicing came, four days later on April 15th, the sudden black tidings of the assassination of Lincoln! The country was engulfed in a whirlpool of horror, of lamentation for a wise and good man and of anxious forebodings for a future for which there seemed no settled policy, no guiding light.

While our elders mourned and feared, we children were stunned with amazement and vague terror. We had read callously enough, of killings of kings and great men of the past in our histories; but that such a thing could ever happen in our civilized age, in our own free country, to our own good and dear President was appalling. It seemed, like an earthquake, to knock away from under us all sense of stability and direction, leaving us dizzy and terrified. But soon our love of the dramatic came to our rescue, and as descriptions of the scene of the assassination began to appear in the daily papers and illustrated weeklies, with one heart and mind we rushed to stage the scene in our outdoor theater. As

## An Echo from Parnassus

pigmies, our imagination was now captured by the deeds of the giants.

The east veranda of Craigie House became the Presidential box at Ford's Theater. The croquet-lawn was marked out as the stage, where the elder Sothern was playing "Lord Dundreary" with his English company in "Our American Cousin." As it was the older girls who had the most knowledge of the events, they directed the action, incidentally absorbing the best rôles. To the younger fell the unimportant parts, and to me, the youngest of all, were assigned the dummy rôles which no one else wanted. The tallest of the older girls was Lincoln in the opening scene where he entered the loge with Mrs. Lincoln and other friends and received the plaudits of the audience. But in the next scene, where he had to sit still and be shot without a word to say or a hand's turn to do, I, though the smallest in stature, was considered quite adequate to the part. Edith and Mary Longfellow and Josie Ames were enacting Lord Dundreary and his tormentors

## Pigmies and Giants

on the stage, while our brilliant and resourceful stage manager, Gertrude Horsford, assuming the rôle of Booth, stole into the Presidential box, held a wooden gun to my head with a loud "Bang!" and flourishing a long paper-cutter with the shout "*Sic semper tyrannis,*" vaulted lightly over the veranda rail on to the stage, four feet below.

The excitement on the stage was tremendous as Trudie dashed through the group of actors, fled past the long-limbed, agile Rose Fay, now Mrs. Theodore Thomas, widow of America's great orchestral conductor and pioneer musician, sole representative of the police and detective force of Washington, and disappeared into a clump of bushes off-stage. I could not keep my eyes shut in the excitement and a voice hissed into my ear, "Sit back and don't stare at the stage. You're dead!" It was "Major Rathbone," himself wounded by Booth's dagger. I hissed back, "I'm no more dead than you are. Keep quiet yourself!"—a retort scarcely marked by Presidential dignity, or

## An Echo from Parnassus

our Craigie House good breeding. But, then, I had played much with boys and my manners sorely needed toning down.

In the next scene the rôles were changed again. Booth, as the lonely, crippled, hunted fugitive was no longer a star part. It was unanimously assigned to me, and I was given a long start to make the tour of the entire grounds alone, circle back and take refuge in the stable at the rear of the Craigie House. The other girls, led by Trudie Horsford and Rose Fay, were the sheriff's posse, hot on my tracks, but delayed as they dashed wildly about the grounds by stopping to search every thicket of shrubs, or climb every tree where I might possibly have tried to conceal myself. Even "Trap," Mr. Longfellow's small fat Skye terrier, was enlisted in the search party, representing a brace of man-hunting bloodhounds.

Poor Booth, pursued and execrated, was rather a lonely and even terrifying rôle for the eight-year-old child. For, though I knew well enough it was all play-acting, yet when

## Pigmies and Giants

I at last took refuge in the hay-loft of the stable, and the girls were jumping about and shouting outside, threatening to burn down the stable, Trap barking furiously the while, it became almost too realistic and I confess that I was on the verge of tears.

If my mind, in our little "Parliament," had been almost too much directed to the distant past, to myth and romance and chivalry; if our English governess had perhaps overlooked the importance of American history and government in the lives of American children, I yet had much to counterbalance this lack elsewhere. For in spite of the attractions of our Craigie House set, I still played occasionally with the little boy neighbors who had been my first friends and earliest playmates, especially with Alexander or "Ellick" B——, a lad only a few months older than myself, with a taste for reading that ran to war stories and tales of Indians, explorers and adventurers, "The Boy of Chancellorsville," "The Boy of Chickamauga," Charles Carleton Coffin's stories of

## An Echo from Parnassus

our great generals, stories of Vicksburg and Fort Donelson, of Gettysburg and Lookout Mountain, of the *Merrimac* and *Monitor*, Boys' Lives of Lincoln and Grant and Farragut. And with these we read the tales of Cooper, of Mayne Reid and—let me whisper it—Beadle's Dime Novels. Of these latter tales I retain only pleasant and instructive memories of Colonial settlers, Indian tribes, blockhouses, tomahawks, scalpings, massacres, and other scenes delightful and innocent in the eyes of childhood. I have never come across these novels in later life, and often wonder why they are always mentioned with bated breath. But then, Mrs. B—— was a watchful mother, and perhaps Ellick owned only the least harmful of the stories. What Ellick read, I, too, of course, read. Boys, I found, had not the taste we girls had for acting out whole scenes. They liked to assume greatness and say "I am Grant," "I am Sherman," "I am Sheridan," and strut around with toy swords and guns and shout commands in hoarse growls, but

## Pigmies and Giants

they had no notion of concerted dramatic action. They were less interesting to play with, but they filled a neglected space in my education.

I was now getting old enough, too, to pick up much of interest and information just from the conversation and table-talk in our own family life, for ever since I was six years old I had been allowed to sit up at the evening meal. I noticed that father was occasionally absent on trips to Washington. I noticed the absence from our table of his friend Senator Sumner, who when not in Washington had been for years our regular Sunday evening guest at supper, dining with Longfellow at Craigie House at 2.30, and spending his evenings with us. My older sisters were devoted to him, but just as I grew old enough to sit at table with the grown-ups, his visits ceased, and I was not to see him again in our house for many years. It was explained to me that he and father, who had so long been associated in the anti-slavery struggle before the War,

## An Echo from Parnassus

now differed in their views on war policies and Reconstruction. This seemed to me a strange reason, for my father often differed in such matters from friends whom he highly valued, like William M. Evarts, Charles Francis Adams, Secretary Seward, and others, and yet their friendship remained unbroken, and they could discuss their differences calmly and fairly. But I was to learn later that Mr. Sumner's was a nature that threw itself into causes from such intense and absolute conviction of right that those who were not positively with him he considered against him. Father was not the only friend with whom he quarreled over differences of procedure, even though their aims and principles might be the same.

For many years in the anti-slavery struggle before the Civil War, there had been a curiously strong and enduring friendship among four men of differing ages and paths of life, Charles Francis Adams, the son of President John Quincy Adams, Dr. John Palfrey, Sumner and my father. The Adams

## Pigmies and Giants

home in Mt. Vernon Street was the center where they met at least once a week for friendly discussion and political sympathy. Sumner and my father were not alone in being ostracized from the "Beacon Hill set" for their anti-slavery views in those days before the War. The older leaders, the gentle, witty and agreeable Dr. Palfrey and the firm, sturdy figure of Adams were also excluded from the homes of the Webster Whigs. In "The Education of Henry Adams" there is a charming picture drawn of these four friends when the boy Henry, studying his Latin lessons in a corner of his father's great library, watched them and listened to them, as they discussed the great problems of the day. Sumner was the boy's hero.

Yet Sumner, shortly before the war, had deliberately turned his back upon Adams.

I never saw a more impressive figure of a man. Of commanding height—he was six feet four inches tall—erect and finely proportioned, with large aquiline features, keen

## An Echo from Parnassus

eyes deepset under bushy eyebrows, and a picturesque mass of wavy iron-gray hair crowning the leonine head, he was indeed of heroic proportions. My older sisters always spoke of him as friendly and kindly with children. But my first childish impressions of him were formed after he had ceased visiting our house, and I saw him only occasionally at Mr. Longfellow's. I stared at him with peculiar interest and awe, for my mother had often told us that this majestic being, with his powerful mentality and lion's courage, had entered upon life as a puny mite of two and a half pounds that had to be wrapped in oil and cotton wool and kept on a shelf above the stove in a sort of improvised incubator during the first months of its life. A twin sister of normal size required little care but the attention lavished on the puny boy was most richly repaid. Small wonder that as I gazed up at him I could think only of demigods and the marvelous myths of antiquity.

But the only occasion I can recall on which

## Pigmies and Giants

he actually spoke to me, he hurt my pride beyond redemption and I never wanted to see him again.

I think it was during the last year of our little "Parliament," when I was between ten and eleven years of age. The youngest of my older sisters was taking a course in Italian art at Miss Wilby's famous school in Boston and was reading most fascinating illustrated books on the subject. With her intimate friends, Emmy Ames, daughter of the artist Joseph Ames, and Sally French, sister of the famous sculptor to be, Daniel Chester French, she attended art exhibitions, and, being a jolly older sister, was always ready to make a chum of me and share with me the books she read and the information she picked up.

So it happened that passing Mr. Longfellow's study one afternoon through the doors so invitingly left ajar, I saw grouped before the open fire Mr. Longfellow and his brother-in-law Mr. "Tom" Appleton, Charles Sumner, Charles Eliot Norton and the gentle

## An Echo from Parnassus

figure of George W. Green. Three of these were my kind and indulgent friends, the other two were more or less formidable. But they were examining and discussing the large Braun photographs recently taken of famous Italian paintings. These art photographs were then something new, sent to Mr. Longfellow by the American artist Alexander, then living in Florence. The pictures under discussion were those of the Bellini brothers. They caught my eye at once.

I tiptoed up to the group and stood there for some time, unobserved, until Mr. Longfellow caught sight of my small, timid figure, and, holding out a friendly hand, drew me to his side, between himself and the gigantic Mr. Summer. The latter looked down at me from his great height and, laying his huge hand on my head, patted it benignantly with the patronizing remark: "When you are a little older, my dear, you will learn about the Bellini brothers!"

Older indeed! I wanted to cry out, "But I know all about them *now*, their names and

## Pigmies and Giants

dates, what style they painted in and where their pictures are! My sister has told me all of this!' But, of course, a pigmy dared not speak to a giant, and I simply felt immeasurably small and kept still. It was characteristic of Mr. Longfellow, who knew something of my studies and how I must have felt, that he smiled down at me—as who should say "We know better, don't we?"—and gave my hand a comprehending and admonitory squeeze. But the great Sumner had immediately forgotten my existence and went right on with the discussion, and it was unthinkable to interrupt again anything so big and majestic. My vanity was irreparably hurt, and I could only take it out in hating him with all the energy of my soul, and always running away from him whenever I met him thereafter. In partial excuse for my absurd feeling, I might add that I have since found out that older and wiser heads than mine were sometimes offended by Sumner's majestic condescension.

But in spite of childish vanity and ani-

## An Echo from Parnassus

mosity, I was old enough to realize that his was one of the truly picturesque and knightly figures of our history, and his long friendship with my father and his circle had made me familiar with the story of Sumner's ardent and heroic career. The coolness which developed between Sumner and my father undoubtedly grew out of their radically differing views on the methods of ridding the country of slavery. Naturally, as a child, I heard this subject discussed over and over again. Father favored a slow, economic release of the slaves with compensation for the owners. The Abolitionists, whom Sumner represented, sought immediate emancipation, and devil take the owners. When the Reconstruction problem loomed, Sumner wanted the former slave-owners disfranchised and the blacks given the vote at once, whereas Father favored the more moderate ideas of Lincoln.

Although Sumner combined most fully the mental and physical attributes of a giant, many other figures, each a giant in his way,

## Pigmies and Giants

crowded before my pigmy eyes and imagination in those memorable days—days, I venture to believe, that can never easily be repeated. Before radio and motion pictures brought the countenance and speech of every well-known man under merciless scrutiny, it was possible for legends to grow and thrive, for glamour to cling around a few public names, and for the owners of those names to be inspired to further achievements by the very halos suspended above them. To-day we know our public men better. The most delightful novelist may reveal himself in a radio speech as a hesitant and almost inarticulate person, possibly with a most unengaging drawl in his speech. And when the least action of a President, from the pinning of a Congressional medal on a war hero to his appearance in a new suit of clothes, is reproduced in every city and hamlet in photographic severity, a man must be great indeed who can still capture the imagination and live as a heroic giant before a public that now knows him almost as well as his

## An Echo from Parnassus

valet—or as the children who play in his back yard!

Oliver Wendell Holmes was one of this Cambridge group to whom a child could yield complete devotion. This dear Autocrat could draw the most timid child to him by his sheer spontaneity and effervescence. I remember how he chatted on, pouring out treasures of wit and wisdom, as simply before the young as before the mature. And what schoolgirl would not be carried away by the subtle flattery of being talked to just as if she were grown-up? As Mrs. Annie Fields has written of him:

“It was not that he was wiser, or wittier, or more profound, or more radiant with humor than some other distinguished men; but with Dr. Holmes sunshine and gayety came into the room. It was not a determination to be cheerful or witty or profound; but it was a natural expression, like that of a child, always open to the influences around him and ready for ‘a good time.’ ”

## Pigmies and Giants

This feeling about him, which I shared so keenly as a child, marks perhaps the sharpest contrast between Holmes and Longfellow. Longfellow's manner was certainly genial, but not spontaneously so. One felt that his geniality sprang from the natural courtesy of a kindly gentleman, desiring to make things pleasant for those around him. I have already mentioned the limericks and nonsense verses with which he used to meet the children. As another example—we children formed a little sewing-circle which we called The Bee. There was some discussion as to whether it should not rather be "The Bees." When we waylaid Mr. Longfellow to beg a subscription of a dollar, he instantly replied:

"If you call it the Bee  
I'll give you three;  
But name it the Hive  
And I'll make it five!"

Nonsense—of course! Yet it shows how readily he entered into the young people's

## An Echo from Parnassus

interests. But, if it was more than a passing encounter, if we remained some time with him, then I felt a consciousness of effort. He was rousing himself to amuse us, to recall anecdotes that would interest children—all very winning and kind, but still—an effort. It may have been, of course, the shadow I unconsciously felt of the great tragedy over his darkened life. Still, it was there—and as an utter charmer of children, he never captured me as wholly in this one respect as the sparkling and fun-loving Dr. Holmes.

By way of variety, I had a publisher as well as poets and authors to complete the childhood circle. James T. Fields—whose firm after many changes of name is now Houghton Mifflin Company—belonged to a school of publishers with whom the reading world, and certainly authors, can never wholly dispense. Genial, witty and the soul of hospitality, he quickly established the happiest relations of friendship, counsel and advice with the authors whose works he pub-

## Pigmies and Giants

lished—and with their children, too. I shall never forget watching Mr. Fields give us imitations of famous actors in their principal rôles—Mr. Fields, with a shawl thrown round him like a cloak, prancing round the library, skipping from chairs to footstools, representing Rolla bounding down the mountain side in Pizarro! With all its fun and hilarity, that evening was for us a veritable education in dramatic art and in discrimination between good and bad in theatrical traditions.

The sculptor, Daniel Chester French, was, of course, a giant only in embryo. His great reputation and his many fine achievements have come since the days when I used to see him, in company with my brother, Dick, and their friend Willie Brewster (later the famous ornithologist), blacking their boots, slicking their hair, scrubbing their faces and putting on their Sunday best to “call” on the belle of the school—the first of the girls to wear her dresses long and put up her hair!

## An Echo from Parnassus

But Dan French played his part, equally with the matured giants, in widening my interests during those maligned Victorian days. He was a charming boy, handsome, amiable, thoughtful and polite. His wood carvings and the wonderful snow animals he made in winter had attracted my parents' attention, and they prophesied great things for him. Father and Mother were both rather reserved, and (vanish Victorian specters!) quite like many parents to-day who do not find it easy to be always playmates or companions to their children. But they were watchful, and deeply interested in all our pursuits, and it would probably have amazed Dan French to know what keen sympathy they felt for his earliest efforts and how often they speculated on his future.

"Dan will be the successor of Crawford and Greenough," I heard them say frequently. "He has amazing gifts, and is such a student." So my fascination in watching his work was fed by older minds—and imagine my pride when the Great Day came on

## Pigmies and Giants

which Dan presented me with a boat he had made!

Among the influences which spurred on my love of music in those days was the frequent sight of that picturesque figure, Ole Bull, the Norwegian violinist. He, by the way, was the "Musician" in Longfellow's "Tales of a Wayside Inn." He was indeed a master to fire the imagination of a young girl, his fine head the summation of what musicians are supposed to look like, and his manner in playing the soul of rapt inspiration. Never have I seen a violinist who held his instrument so high in the air, as if, by this gesture he could send his notes up the ladder to the stars.

Ole Bull was a frequent visitor at the Longfellow house, and also at the home of Professor E. N. Horsford, whose daughters were our playmates. At that time Professor Horsford was already interested in the idea of the Scandinavian discovery of America, a subject which later became a serious

## An Echo from Parnassus

hobby with him. The American girl whom Ole Bull married was the sister of Mr. Joseph Gilbert Thorp, who later married Longfellow's daughter, Annie—"Laughing Allegra." Thus Ole Bull became very much a part of our youth, and we were thrilled beyond measure to hear this great master play, and dominate by the fire of his tone, at the big "Gilmore Peace Jubilee" in Boston, in June, 1869.

Nor must I forget, as one of the lively impressions of those years, Charles Dickens. I was taken twice to hear his readings when he came to Boston. The first time Mr. Longfellow took me with his younger children to hear "Christmas Carol" and selections from "Pickwick Papers." Now the character of Sam Weller had always been a special idol for us young people. But such is the natural parochialism of youth, that we had fondly fancied him as a slouching Yankee with the slow drawl so much affected by American humorists of the day. Thus it was actually

## Pigmies and Giants

a keen disappointment to us to have Dickens read and impersonate him as the smart, snappy Cockney lad—which, of course, he was. We could hardly keep up with his rattling and skipping about.

The second reading was of “David Copperfield,” and I went to it with Mr. and Mrs. James T. Fields and their nieces. When it was over, the Fields took us behind the scenes to meet Dickens, and I am sure I was struck quite dumb at meeting so much celebrity from overseas—such is the influence of mere distance! Dickens’ reading of David was quite extraordinary. It was astonishing that one man in evening clothes, standing alone on a bare stage, could make the whole scene of the shipwreck so vivid and intense. We saw the storm, the characters and the tragedy. His “Dora” was inimitable. He made her such a lovable little fool.

Of the singular impressions I received from my father’s talk about Lincoln, I shall say more presently. I have put down here

## An Echo from Parnassus

merely some of those forces—in terms of human beings—which crowded eagerly into my pigmy days, and made them so immeasurably vivid, filled with variety, and so stimulating to my whole future life. At three score and ten years, which is my allotted span of life, it matters little whether these early days were Victorian, or simply moments of spontaneous and full existence. I know that I was alive—thoroughly so—and that life gave back to me freely and generously of all the interest I could put into my childlike questionings. It is something to have lived, even as a pigmy, in the days when men could still seem to be giants, and seeming so, appear also human, lovable, erect and engaging.

## CHAPTER X

### LINCOLN—GIANT OF GIANTS

**W**HEN I hear, to-day, the solemnity with which the name of Lincoln is mentioned—when the radio brings me, on his birthday, the eloquent and fervent tributes of a President, of bankers, politicians and even of school children—then there comes before me a curiously different picture. In my childhood, his name was anything but a symbol. He was a Western rural politician, whose election seemed to many a national calamity.

I am afraid we children saw him only through the distressed and doubtful eyes of our elders. I cannot remember any of us, boy or girl, choosing the part of Lincoln when we acted out the stirring scenes of the Civil War. No boy strutted about, with

## An Echo from Parnassus

hands behind his back saying: "I am the President—the Commander-in-Chief of all the Generals and Armies." What boy, forty years later, could have resisted saying this when Teddy, the Rough Rider, was President? No—Lincoln was no popular idol to us when alive. It took his assassination to shed the glamour of martyrdom around his head, and to lend him something of the splendor of a legend.

As so often happens in times of stress and crisis, there were very few in a position to understand the complexity of Lincoln's problem, and many to judge his every action from the view of their own special theories and hobbies. His extraordinary patience and tenacity were interpreted in the light of private ignorance or passion or distrust, rarely with any eagerness to discover their deeper purpose. Thus, as children, we could little suspect how the passage of a brief half century would enshrine Lincoln among the American immortals.

My father was probably as fair in his

## Lincoln—Giant of Giants

opinions of Lincoln as anyone in that particular New England circle. He was, during the entire war period, and well on into the Reconstruction era, United States District Attorney for Massachusetts, and in that sense, as well as through his personal contacts with Sumner and Seward, Secretary of State, a part of the Lincoln administration. But in days when even Lincoln's Cabinet failed to yield respect to the President and its members generally were at sixes and sevens, bickering and quarreling among themselves, it is not surprising that my father's early opinions of Lincoln were far from favorable.

The Emancipation Proclamation filled him with doubt. "I fear it is not *statesmanship*," he used to say. "It *may* be right, and *may* be successful, and it *has been* done—which is enough reason for keeping misgivings private. I can support the President, of course; but I fear the Proclamation is to be a *dead failure*. It only threatens to abolish slavery in the States that continue disloyal—that is,

## An Echo from Parnassus

in the States we cannot conquer, and in which we cannot emancipate one slave. When the noise is over, I fear the majority will think as I do."

Of course, Father looked at this question strictly as a lawyer. But, as children, we could not help absorbing much of his feeling. Nor did we receive much encouragement to idolize Lincoln from Father's reports of conditions in Washington during the next year or so.

"The most striking thing in the politics of Washington," he told his family, "is the absence of personal loyalty to the President. It does not exist. He has no admirers, no enthusiastic supporters, none to bet on his head. If a Republican convention were to be held to-morrow, he would not get the vote of a single State. He does not act nor talk nor feel like the ruler of a great empire in a great crisis. This has a disastrous effect on all departments and classes of officials, as well as on the public."

Father also thought Lincoln was fonder of

## Lincoln—Giant of Giants

details than of principles—a curious view, indeed, as we look back upon it, but one gathered from personal observation on the spot and therefore doubly interesting.

Father gave this description of Lincoln:

"He prefers to talk and tell stories with all sorts of persons who come to him for all sorts of purposes than to give his mind to the noble and manly duties of his great post. His cabinet feels this. He has a kind of shrewdness and common sense, mother wit, and slipshod, low-leveled honesty that made him a good Western jury lawyer. But he is an unutterable calamity to us where he is. Only the Army can save us."

Nearly a year later, Father still looked to the Army and victory as the only hopes, finding that "the lack of respect for the President, in all parties, is unconcealed." Just how far the uncouth personal appearance of Lincoln helped to cloud the popular impression is hard to say, but in Father's case, at least, it could not have had great weight—for certainly the general-in-chief of the

## An Echo from Parnassus

armies, upon whom he pinned the "only hope," struck him with equally small personal glamour. I cannot resist the temptation of quoting Father's description of Grant as he wrote it to us in a letter:

"A short, round-shouldered man," he says, "in a very tarnished major-general's uniform came up, and asked about his card for General Dana, which led me to look at him. There was nothing marked in his appearance. He had no gait, no *station*, no manner, rough, light-brown whiskers, a blue eye, and rather a scrubby look withal. A crowd formed round him, men looked, stared at him, as if they were taking his likeness, and two generals were introduced. Still, I could not get his name. It was not Hooker. Who could it be? He had a cigar in his mouth, and rather the look of a man who did, or once did, take a little too much to drink. I inquired of the bookkeeper. 'That is General Grant.' I joined the starers. I saw that the ordinary, scrubby-looking man, with a slightly seedy look, as if he was out of office and on half-pay, and nothing to do but hang round the entry of Willard's, cigar in mouth, had a

## Lincoln—Giant of Giants

clear blue eye and a look of resolution, as if he could not be trifled with, and an entire indifference to the crowd about him. Straight nose, too. Still, to see him talking and smoking in the lower entry of Willard's in that crowd, in such times—the generalissimo of our Armies, on whom the destiny of the empire seemed to hang!"

The next day, Father met General Grant at a breakfast with some friends. "He was just leaving the table," wrote Father, "and going to the front for the great movement. . . . He gets over the ground queerly. He does not march, nor quite walk, but pitches along as if the next step would bring him on his nose. But his face looks firm and hard, and his eye is clear and resolute, and he is certainly natural and clear of all appearance of self-consciousness. How war, how all great crises bring us to the one-man power!"

So much for Father's ability to waive personal appearance. It was only a short time after this that his opinion of Lincoln began to change. Possibly the President himself

## An Echo from Parnassus

had changed with the burdens and trials of office. At any rate, after spending a half hour at the White House with Mrs. Lincoln, followed by an equal or longer time with Lincoln, this is the way he felt:

“The President . . . was sobered in his talk, told no extreme stories, said some good things and some hopelessly natural and naïve things. You can’t help feeling an interest in him, a sympathy and a kind of pity; feeling, too, that he has some qualities of great value, yet fearing that his weak points may wreck him or wreck something. His life seems a series of wise, sound conclusions, slowly reached, oddly worked out, on great questions, with constant failures in administration of details and dealings with individuals.”

Lincoln’s place in our history is so secure that I have not hesitated to refer to these quite different glimpses of him which we obtained as children through older eyes. By the time reconstruction loomed as the great issue, Father’s respect and admiration for

## Lincoln—Giant of Giants

Lincoln had grown greatly—so much so that I know he felt his death to be no less of an “unutterable calamity” than, earlier, he had pictured his holding of the Presidency. For us children, the stature of Lincoln grew with our own years, until he surpassed all the other giants and broke the bonds of frail mortality.

## CHAPTER XI

### MUSIC—AND ITS MASTERS

THE decision which sent me abroad for a great part of my later schooling served, of course, to break the walls of a strictly New England environment. Yet the decision itself was made by Victorian parents and abounded in that desire for broad training and rich experience which, it seems to me, was strong in their souls. At all events, they gave me this chance to absorb, as only a child can, the life and thought and aspirations of other countries so that returning, as I did a few years later, to New England, I was still, for good or bad, a product of that soil and the educational ideals that grew out of it.

In spite of my being the youngest of six children, my parents showed no inclination to

## Music—and Its Masters

“repress” any reasonable ambitions I might have and as I was already making some progress at the piano, it was decided that I might go to Stuttgart with my mother and sisters and, if possible, enter the Artists’ School of the Royal Conservatory. The final arrangements involved my living during my second year there with a German family where I could acquire the language and learn something of German literature.

The period immediately following the Franco-Prussian War was, of course, one of great emotional intensity in Germany. It was the time when the smaller German kingdoms and principalities were learning the price they had to pay for military success in submitting to the overlordship of Prussia. We were fortunate in having letters from Mr. Longfellow to the German poet and revolutionary, Ferdinand Freiligrath, who had translated *Hiawatha* and many other Longfellow poems. Freiligrath seemed to us a highly romantic figure, as he had been exiled for his views and writings in 1848 and only

## An Echo from Parnassus

recently pardoned and repatriated in 1870. His was one of the most hospitable and delightful households I have ever known and to hear the wonders of German literature discussed in such an atmosphere with all that semi-religious zeal with which the Germans regard their national poets and writers, opened up new and fascinating vistas, quite different, indeed, from the lights and luminaries of New England.

Of course the surroundings of the Court of Württemberg impressed our republican minds deeply. So much glamour and pageantry and sense of tradition! It all culminated in a gigantic review of troops at which there were present no less than three Emperors. Small wonder that I felt I was living in a land of dreams, where anything might happen at the next turn in the road.

Music, however, was the core of the reason for my being in Stuttgart, and along with my own studies, no opportunity was allowed to slip by for my hearing the greatest musicians of the day. Music had been

## Music—and Its Masters

far from lacking in Cambridge and Boston, where we had the oratorios presented by the Handel and Haydn Society, symphonies under the Harvard Musical Association and others, and where we heard in opera such celebrities of the day as Clara Kellogg, Phillips and the incomparable and majestic Parepa-Rosa. But in Stuttgart I could add to this the intense and youthful thrill of hearing frequently such artists as Clara Schumann, Hans von Bülow and that greatest violin master of many generations, Joseph Joachim, in his prime. He never had quite the grace or extraordinary delicacy and charm of Sarasate, but the instrument became a living soul under Joachim's bow and fingers.

We found that entrance into the Royal Conservatory would not be a very difficult matter—but merit, and not money, was the sole avenue leading to promotion in the Artists' or Professional School. This school was divided into two departments, the first providing six months of fundamental train-

## An Echo from Parnassus

ing, and the second private instruction by one of four staff teachers, assignment being made on merit only, the same price being paid by all.

My days during the first six months were rather awesome. The "fundamental training" took place under a corps of assistants supervised by a roaring giant named Sigmund Lebert. He could, on occasions, be delightful, but when displeased by what he chose to regard as stupidity or suspected of being laziness, he resorted quickly to rapping one's knuckles or to the more spectacular and less painful method of smashing a chair. On the whole, I was relieved to have the six months terminate with the tidings that I had merited promotion and been assigned by good fortune to one of the finest teachers in the school—Dionys Pruckner.

I had already cast my hopeful eye on Pruckner's name, for he was known as a pupil of the great Liszt, and was one to whom Liszt frequently sent those of his own pupils who needed further grounding. My

## Music—and Its Masters

year and a half with Pruckner gave me a foundation which I felt instinctively to be as firm as rock and prepared the way for the next great musical experience I was to have the following year. Pruckner urged me to remain in Stuttgart and complete the full professional course with a view of taking up the piano as my career. But I doubt if I ever had the temperament or desire for that kind of a life. Music was something which I absorbed and loved for its own sake, for the exaltation or the comfort or the charm it could bring, but not as a means of livelihood. I wanted the solid basis of an artist's training, because I knew the desolation that could be wrought in a drawing-room by the average "amateur" pianist; but I did not want the precarious life of a professional artist.

And so it happened that instead of remaining in Germany, I found myself in Paris where my parents placed me in a convent school—of which more later. It was there I discovered the teacher whose personality and genius for interpretation unleashed all

## An Echo from Parnassus

the technical preparation of Stuttgart and made the piano the living and responsive medium that it remained for me in long years to come.

The delightful and mild-mannered gentleman who was to give not only the piano but all of musical literature a new meaning for me, was at that time an obscure musician, hardly known outside of Paris, and known even there chiefly as the organist at the Church of Sainte Clothilde. To-day his name is known wherever music is known—but neither as teacher, pianist nor organist. For this rather lonely and pathetic figure was none other than the world-famous composer, César Franck!

It has always seemed to me that my first meeting with him etched his character with the clarity of steel. As a student in a Pensionnat outside of Paris, it was very difficult for me to come into Paris itself for lessons, and it was suggested that Franck, the organist, might not only be a satisfactory teacher, but that, being less exalted than some of the

## Music—and Its Masters

more famous Parisian instructors, his prices would be reasonable and he might be willing to come out to Auteuil to give me two lessons a week. Accordingly, an interview was arranged—at Auteuil!

The appointed day arrived. I was sent in to the parlor, introduced to César Franck, and then requested to sit down. This surprised me somewhat, as I supposed I would be required to play for him and establish my fitness to be his pupil. After all, even a mere Paris organist might have very definite standards! But Franck, quite oblivious of this, sat down at the piano and began to play. Five minutes passed, and still he played. Ten minutes, twenty, then half an hour—a private recital whose richness, charm and inspiration made the sixteen-year-old girl beside him utterly unaware of passing time. Then, quite abruptly, he stopped and turned to me with an almost diffident smile.

“And now,” he asked, “does Mademoiselle feel she would be content to have me as a teacher?”

## An Echo from Parnassus

Just what I stammered in reply I have never known. After the stern authority of Lebert in Stuttgart—with his ability at smashing chairs and bruising knuckles—the simple modesty and deference of César Franck was utterly bewildering. I have always cherished this portrait of the sublime composer of the mystic symphony and the aspiring sonata submitting himself to the approval of a slip of an American girl—each quite unaware of the world acclaim that was to greet him—after his death!

Further to seal the irony of events, I found on my return to Boston that it was just as well to pass over my Paris piano instruction lightly and to accept with due grace the higher dignity of being a pupil of one of Boston's own illustrious teachers!

Franck's greatest achievement as a teacher was in inspiring the art of interpretation. He never insisted on my accepting his own feelings in the matter. In fact, he would often ask me to play a piece in my own way first, and then, after listening carefully, say

## Music—and Its Masters

in his kindly way—"Very good—not exactly as I should play it—but quite understandable. Now—if you would like to hear another way—" and then he would play it himself, calling my attention with his eyes to special passages, and always with the modesty of the artist who realizes that music may and should change its feeling with the personality of the player. Needless to say, I generally ended by seeing the vastly greater beauty and grace of his interpretations, but it was pleasant to feel that a teacher could try to draw out his pupil rather than impose his own ideas.

I took particular delight in my studies of Beethoven under Franck. In all, we went over seven sonatas in their entirety (Op. 7, 13, 26, 27, 31, 11 and Op. 90) but from other sonatas he would pick out a largo followed by a scherzo, here a minuet, there a rondo, and suggest that I play them as separate and charming solo numbers. He had no objections to this amiable dismemberment—for after all, if we can break up Bach suites and

## An Echo from Parnassus

chamber music quartets this way, why not the Beethoven sonatas, too, except where the movements follow each other as the scenes in a drama?

Franck was much interested when I recalled that Von Bülow had a charming way of playing the opening of the Moonlight Sonata that I have not heard from any other virtuoso—that of slightly, very slightly, stressing the last note in the left hand triplets. They form a melody of their own that breaks the otherwise too insistent monotony of the figure. Instead of resenting, Franck always welcomed points like this, with none of the arrogance which some musicians affect concerning their own interpretations.

In another way, too, the training under Franck was invaluable. He had a genius for making interesting and varied programs with a rare catholicity of taste. I heard him many times in his least known rôle of concert pianist, and on these occasions his own programs were based chiefly on Schumann, Chopin and Beethoven, composers who, he

## Music—and Its Masters

felt, understood the genius of the piano. But he introduced many other selections which might have shocked ultraclassical critics—pieces such as Schulhoff's *Aubade*, the Bach-Lavignac *Pentecost Aria*, William Krüger's *Grand Fantasy* on Russian Folk-songs, and Thalberg's transcriptions from “*L'Art du Chant.*” In other words, he was not a confirmed classicist. He liked such pieces because, as he would say with simplicity, “they are admirably written, are very musical, and very effective for the piano.”

And with what ineffable style Franck played them! He played not alone in the so-called *Grand style*, but was a master of any style the composition called for, the elegancies and subtleties of the salon, the rollicking mischief of a Beethoven scherzo, a Handel *bourrée*, the dramatic intensity of a Chopin *Ballade* or *Polonaise*, the sentimental graces of the *nocturnes* and *waltzes*, the bravura of the *études* and *scherzos* or the sorrow of the *preludes*. All styles were his own and clearly differentiated. People think of him largely

## An Echo from Parnassus

as a composer, a mystic, lofty, spiritual, tender, majestic. But at the piano as I knew him, as the most beloved of teachers, or as an interpreter in concert he was simply—everything!

In all, I studied under César Franck for eleven months, maintaining the schedule of two lessons a week. Of all the experiences of my “Victorian” girlhood, few stand out in fonder memory than these hours spent, quite unwittingly, beside one of the loftiest geniuses of his day—the man great enough, in his rich humility, to ask a little girl if she would “accept” him as her teacher!

## CHAPTER XII

### A PIGMY LOOKS AT A QUEEN

AFTER the royal glamour of Stuttgart, the move to Republican Paris might have seemed an abrupt comedown, were it not for the fact that echoes of the terror of the Commune still reverberated and brought back the stark memories of one of the world's most turbulent capitals.

Many of these echoes still rang in the walls of the school where my family placed me after many serious conferences. The place selected was the Convent of the Assumption at Auteuil. Once more I was to go through the wholly pleasant discipline of adjusting myself to new surroundings, people with traditions wholly unlike those either of Cambridge or Stuttgart. In the first place, I was under the care of nuns—and not a

## An Echo from Parnassus

little uneasy at first to discover just what these strange women were like. Then, too, the Assumption Convent was the training school for girls from many of the oldest and most famous families in France. What would these girls think of an American? Would I be beneath their notice, or would they turn out to be very much like all other children on the edge of maturity? Would the discipline be very strict—the solemnity of the place unbearable—the atmosphere of this strange religion intolerant to a Protestant and an alien?

Many years later, when I became a Catholic, I could look back at these thoughts and laugh, knowing the happiness and gayety that prevails in convent walls. But at the time my uneasiness was fed by the strangeness of the prospect and by the mystery which so much of our literature has thrown about convents and the supposedly heart-broken creatures who take refuge there when lovers have died or step-parents been cruel.

Of course, I knew that my parents had

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

looked into the matter very carefully, and that if they permitted me to go there it would only be with the strict understanding that nothing would be done to influence me against the beliefs into which I was born. This proved amply true—and up to the day I left, I was never conscious of any desire to be other than I was. Whatever influences I may have felt were only those of example, and a removal of the sense of strangeness which made my first approach to the convent walls awesome.

Although I did not realize it until a few weeks later, the Auteuil convent had bred a race of heroines. One of them, Mother Marie Seraphine, a courageous and big-hearted woman, had been the energetic superior there during the siege of Paris and the Commune of 1871. When the convent was seized by the Reds in a search for rumored “hidden treasures,” she marched boldly, a soldier at either side holding a loaded pistol at her head, leading the Communist officials from tower and garret to

## An Echo from Parnassus

basement and cellar, gayly pointing out nooks and crannies they had overlooked, gayly laughing in their faces when their search failed to reveal the expected treasures and secret passages. Later, when government troops were besieging the Reds, when bullets were raining in the convent grounds and shells bursting in the house itself, then Mother Seraphine and her little band of Sisters became ministering angels to the sick and wounded Communists. Of such stuff as this were the early mothers of the Assumption—heroic, high-souled women of brilliant intellect, ardent piety, and gallant hearts.

But to all—whether the older nuns, the younger novices, or the pupils—the Foundress of the Assumption Order,\* Mother Eugénie de Jésus was “*notre Mère*,” “our Mother”; so absolutely, by nature and by grace, the right person in the right place, that

\* Mother Eugénie Milleret de Brou, whose distinguished life work has recently been so ably told in a book by Alice Lady Lovat.

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

even we careless school children knew instinctively that the Hand of God was in it.

If I were to say what most struck me in Mother Eugénie de Jésus, it was the sense of utter straightforwardness, the dignified simplicity of truth and justice. There was an atmosphere about her of a sort of glorified common sense, that made me feel one could go to her in any difficulty, great or small, with absolute confidence that it would be settled and settled right! No fear that that clear head would fail to penetrate the trouble, or that big heart fail to comprehend and, comprehending, to deal justly. And one would be dismissed with a genial smile, an affectionate gesture, a humorous word of cheer that left peace and satisfaction and courage in the soul.

This much of the personality of the Mother Foundress of the Assumption even a schoolgirl in her 'teens could recognize. Of her history, of her profound learning, her varied accomplishments, her splendid achievements, and the veneration in which she was

## An Echo from Parnassus

held by distinguished personages of the period I had no means of knowing at that time.

In fact, during my first days at the Convent, I knew chiefly that I was homesick. I might try to recall those days—but as I have many of the letters which I wrote from Auteuil, it may give more of the freshness of my experience and a closer glimpse of the lives of French girls in that Victorian era, to quote passages from these letters now. They relate in large part to the most distinguished pupil of the Convent at that day—the little Princess Mercédès, daughter of the Orléans Duke of Montpensier, and younger sister of the Countess of Paris. In January, five years later, she was to marry Alphonso XII, King of Spain and father of the present King. At last the little pigmy from New England was to mix her hours of music under César Franck with glimpses of a future Queen sitting at the desk right ahead!

The first letter was written shortly after my arrival:

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

“PENSIONNAT OF THE CONVENT  
OF THE ASSUMPTION, AUTEUIL,  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, 1873.

“DEAR.....

“This night we bid farewell to liberty. Tomorrow is the grand ‘Rentrée’ at the convent, when all the scholars come back, and then vacation will be over, lessons will begin, and there will be no more peace for the wicked. At present only about a dozen of us have come, mostly foreigners, and we have an easy time of it, with very little restraint, but of course when there will be one hundred and fifty girls to manage, everything will have to go like clock-work. I am beginning to get a little acquainted with the nuns, who are lovely, each one more so than the other, so cheerful, and many of them so clever. But you never saw anything like the number of superioresses; there seems to be one at every turning, like the captains on the ship in ‘Innocents Abroad.’ As we are going to breakfast a nun is seen approaching, and we all stand aside and courtesy, for this is the su-

## An Echo from Parnassus

perior-general. On the way back another nun looms up in the distance. This turns out to be the superioress of what we call the 'Little Convent,' a building the other side of the park where the younger children live. While we are at lessons somebody else comes in and we all rise. I inquire who this may be, and am informed that it is the superioress of the 'Great Convent.' At the noon recreation we wander out to the grounds to play, and soon up one of the paths the superioress of the convent at Malaga is seen, coming to speak with the little Spanish children. She is here as she had to leave Malaga for some reason; possibly there were too many superioresses there. Meanwhile another nun has hove in sight, and the sister in charge of us suddenly calls out, 'Make your courtesy, my children. This is the superioress of the novitiate.' I begin to wonder with Mark Twain if you could heave a rock in any given direction without hitting a superioress; but it wouldn't do to try the experiment, for the superioress of the Pensionnat is sitting in

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

the room where I am writing. Shouldn't you think this was enough for any earthly institution without counting first and second mistresses of class, and I don't know how many others? The last-named superioress has been an angel of comfort to us poor little homesick wretches, for this has been a night of tears. You never saw such a melancholy set as we all were a few minutes ago. It began at dinner, where a Greek girl, Alexandrine by name, big enough and old enough to have known better, cried because she didn't like something we had to eat.\* That started another girl, and there soon broke out a chorus of sympathetic sobs from the younger children, while the rest of us sat round looking pretty dejected. It is forlorn enough at best at meal-time. The refectory is a great stone room meant to accommodate the whole school, and we sit, forming a very insignificant group, at one extreme end, cheerless rows of empty tables and benches stretching before us, and our voices echoing with a most sepulchral sound. Up in the recreation-hall

## An Echo from Parnassus

it all broke out afresh. We tried to sing and have games, but they wouldn't go off. There are half a dozen little Spaniards who don't know a word of French, and of course they feel utterly deserted and forlorn, and one after the other they began crying as if their hearts would break. The Greek girl soon joined in, and then the English girl followed. When I saw Regina go, I could hold out no longer, and two girls from the French provinces were soon the only survivors of the general wreck. But before long the door opened, and there stood the lovely superior-ess of the pensionnat, in the purple serge robe and long white veil of the order, looking like a vision from a better world. She sat down among us and we crowded round her, on the floor or wherever we could be nearest, each trying to get hold of her dress, as if that could do us any good, and by and by she succeeded in getting us consoled and our eyes dried. Regina and I are now writing letters home, and Madame Marie is telling the other children a story; I can't make

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

out what the story is, but there must be a horror to it, they all look so deeply interested and excited, and Antoinette's hair is quite standing on end. However, that is rather the normal condition of Antoinette's hair.

*“Sunday, October 12th, 1873.* All the scholars are back again now, and you wouldn't know the old building, it is so swarming with girls. We are divided into two classes, the 'Grande' and the 'Moyenne.' The 'Petite Classe' of fifty or more little ones is at the other convent, and entirely separate from us in every way. There is to be a distinguished addition to the Pensionnat next week in the shape of one of the Orléans princesses, a daughter of the Duke of Montpensier. She is to be installed here as a day-scholar, and will have her seat in class and be in every way just like one of us. The Countess of Paris, who is her sister, was also educated here. This little princess, they say, is betrothed to her cousin, the young prince of the Asturias, and if that is the case, she

## An Echo from Parnassus

may be queen of Spain some day, though to be sure it doesn't look much like it just now. My neighbor in class, Alexandrine, the Greek girl, is much excited over the advent of this royal damsel, and has been entertaining me lately with her notions of rank. It is strict silence in study-hour, but Alexandrine is afflicted with no conscience to speak of. She has a way of lifting the cover of her desk to hunt for a book, and, screened thus from the eyes of the mistress in charge, she proceeds to give me the benefit of a few remarks. Alexandrine being rather given to the vanities of this world, her notions of what is consistent with royalty get little further than dress. I verily believe she expects the princess to appear among us in a satin gown and diamonds.

*“Monday, October 20th. This morning I staid in from recreation to help one of the Ribbons arrange a desk for the little Princess of Montpensier, who was expected to-day. There was not much choice among the*

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

desks; they are all pretty well battered and ink-stained, and hacked with pen-knives; but we chose one that, on the whole, was as respectable as any we could hope to find and went to work to wipe it off and scrub up the inkstand. The school-rooms are high and sunny, with long windows opening to the ground and giving a pretty view over the lawn and walks. They are furnished with several rows of desks painted black originally, at which we sit on square wooden stools. The only visible difference between the princess and ourselves will be that she will have a chair instead of a stool at her desk. We have chosen the front row for her seat, and she will be next to and under the special charge of Anne de G. ...., one of the Ribbons,—the first scholar of her division, and the youngest in it. It is always the custom to put a newcomer under the protection of one of these children wearing the white ribbon and medal, who are the good girls and monitors of the school. The princess will be just in front of me as we sit in

## An Echo from Parnassus

class, so I shall have a good opportunity to observe her. This will also put her in front of Alexandrine, who is much elated at the prospect of being in such a distinguished neighborhood, and kept hovering about us during the arrangements, in great fear lest we might undertake to change her seat, much to the distress of the good little novice guarding the recreation, who kept calling her back to the grounds and threatening her with bad notes every time she wandered into the school-room.

*“Tuesday, October 21st.* The princess actually arrived this morning, and is now well installed here. The Duke and Duchess of Montpensier came out with her, to call on the superioress and see the school. It was just at the noon recreation and we were all out in the park, so they walked round and visited the play grounds of the different classes, and staid some time watching our games. We had been told we were to stand still and courtesy as they passed, but the

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

duke and duchess begged particularly that our game of prisoner's base should not be interrupted, as they wanted to see how well we could play. You can imagine that on hearing this, we chased each other with great zeal. Poor Alexandrine has dropped from the clouds! She doesn't think much of the French royal family now. Of course we were all looking out eagerly for our new schoolmate, and she soon appeared, walking with the governess a little way behind her parents and the superioress. All we could see was that she was a girl of thirteen or so, still in short dresses, with a pleasant, dark face, almost hidden under a broadbrimmed straw hat. She had on a very simple little suit of some purple-and-white striped stuff, and wore white cotton gloves and boots without heels. Fancy the feelings of Alexandrine! They were somewhat assuaged however by the appearance of the duchess. She is the sister of Queen Isabella, and is a tall, distinguished-looking woman, and was very richly dressed, and full of animation,

## An Echo from Parnassus

and seemed very much interested in everything she saw. The princess was not formally introduced to us till after we had gone into class, when the superioress brought her in to show her her seat. She had taken her hat off and looked very shy and pretty as she came in. She seemed to be a good deal embarrassed at facing so many girls, and hung her head a little, and answered in a very low voice when she was spoken to, but her eyes looked up bright and full of intelligence. There is something very attractive about her: she is perfectly simple and unassuming. She took her seat at her desk, and Anne de G. .... showed her about her lessons and the books she would need. I had a good chance to examine the princess as she sat directly in front of me. She is large and well-formed for her age, and sits up very straight, though she droops her head a little. Her complexion is very fine and clear, with a healthy tinge, and her features are pleasing, especially the eyes, which are of a soft gray or hazel, with dark lashes, deep set, and very

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

bright and full of expression. Her hair is jet black, and splendidly thick and glossy. She wears it brushed tight to her head and braided in two braids, which are fastened low across the back of her head. Then she has a very white throat and pretty-shaped ears, and altogether promises to develop into quite a handsome woman. We had been told beforehand by the nuns that we must all call her 'Madame.' It seemed a funny idea to call such a little girl Madame, especially here, where we all call each other by our first names, whatever the difference in age or rank, but the nuns didn't think it right that we should be quite so familiar with a future queen. I noticed however that they themselves called her by her name 'Mercédès.'\*

"At the three-o'clock recreation, instead of going to the playgrounds we had permission to walk up and down the alleys with Madame

\* Marie de las Mercédès-Isabelle Françoise d'Assisi-Antonie-Ferdinande d'Orléans, Princess of Montpensier, Infanta of Spain; born 1860, married the 23d of January, 1878, to Alfonso XII de Bourbon, King of Spain.

## An Echo from Parnassus

and show her the grounds, which we were delighted to do. We always like a walk, for then we can chatter to our hearts' content, and after so many hours of study and silence, liberty to talk is what we most crave. But it turned out afterward that poor Madame was dreadfully disappointed at there not being any games, as she was crazy to play with us. We had such a shout at Louise R. .... When the rolls were being passed for lunch she was told to put one on the princess's desk, and she looked up in such a surprised way and asked, 'But can she eat plain bread?' Madame staid out with us till six. We all like what we have seen of her. She tries very hard to fall into all our ways, and was quite distressed at having a chair when the rest of us sat on stools. The chair was not much to boast of, but she didn't like being different in any way from the other girls.

*"Wednesday, October 22d. Our little princess lost her prisoner's base again, for*

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

this was 'parlor day,' and at noon we all go up to the dormitories to have our heads shampooed, and after that operation is over we put on our blue uniforms, to be ready if we are called to the parlor.

"Madame was to study her English lesson while we were upstairs; and it was decided that I should stay with her to keep her company, as I could help her with her English lesson if she wanted it. So downstairs I staid. I had never spoken to Madame yet, and I suppose each of us felt a little shy, and there we sat for some time at different ends of the room, each pretending to study very hard and secretly eyeing the other. After a while I ventured to ask in English if I could give her any help. She refused, and we took to our books again and there was another silence. Pretty soon, however, she looked up and asked me if I knew her English teacher, Sister Mary of the Incarnation, and there a spring of sympathy was opened. This lovely nun, who is half worshiped by the girls, is to be sent on a mission to the

## An Echo from Parnassus

little savages in New Caledonia, and in mourning her departure Madame and I grew quite friendly. She is rather shy at first about talking, but is quite animated after she gets started, and I fancy she likes a little fun as much as anybody else. At the afternoon recreation, which is an hour long on Wednesdays, we took great pains to get up a game for Madame's benefit, but so many of the Grandes were called to the parlor that we had to condescend to play with the Moyennes, who were much honored, and we had an exciting game. The Moyennes had been awfully jealous when Madame was put in our class, as she is younger than most of the Grandes, but the superioress put them down nicely when they grumbled by saying, 'When the Moyennes are as reasonable and studious as the Grandes we shall be glad to put a newcomer amongst them, but at present we think the princess would receive a better example of good conduct and industry from the Grandes.' At this the Moyennes blushed and were silent, for in all their great

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

class they have only one girl wearing a ribbon of any kind. At first, some of us undertook to instruct Madame in prisoner's base, but we soon found she knew it as well as any of us; she is a fast runner and will make a capital player. Some of the girls were a little shy with her and wouldn't chase her very hard at first, but she saw through it and seemed quite hurt by it, and would purposely put herself in their way so that they couldn't avoid catching her, and we soon felt at ease all round. I think she is going to be a trump. Without losing the gentleness and simplicity of her manners she is fast getting over her shyness, and though there is nothing rough about her yet she is bright and gay, with plenty of spirit and ready for all sorts of adventures.

*“November . . . . .* Such a funny time as I have of it at the drawing class! I am seated next to two Moyennes who are noted as the greatest chatterers in their class, Julie and Blanche. The nuns, who are deluded

## An Echo from Parnassus

enough to look on me as one of the good girls, expect me to keep them in some sort of order, but I have given up the task long ago. On the other side of me is the little Princess of Montpensier, and she is my hope and comfort, for she has some susceptibilities. She is not very industrious; she works well a little while and then waits for the teacher to come and correct her drawing, and meanwhile employs herself scribbling her name and initials, 'M. O.,' 'Mercédès d'Orléans,' 'M. O.,' in every corner of the paper. But she takes the slightest hint very nicely, just giving a good-natured little laugh and shrug and going right to work again. The princess evidently thinks Blanche's stories great fun and listens with all her ears, often giving me a mischievous little look that shows she sees through them perfectly. Madame is quickly getting used to our ways here. She is very ambitious to do everything just as we do and watches us closely, so that now she falls into rank with the rest of us as we march in files from one room to another, or

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

from the refectory to the play-ground, and makes her courtesy on entering or leaving a room as if she had been trained to it for years.

“She told us a little to-day about her ways at home. The Duchess of Montpensier brings up her children very sensibly, and they all have to get up at six and go to bed at eight. Madame was quite disappointed when she came here to find that our hours are even earlier than hers, for we get up at half past five. However her bed-time is earliest, which consoled her somewhat. Her playmate is the Prince Ferdinand, a year older than herself. They treat their parents with the greatest respect and never dream of going to bed without their father’s blessings. Mercédès says that sometimes when their father is off with the hunt he is delayed till nearly midnight; but, instead of undressing, the children stay downstairs and take naps in chairs till he gets back. They are never allowed to lie on sofas when older people are present, but Mercédès says she

## An Echo from Parnassus

can sleep very soundly in a chair. When the father comes home, they just wake up enough to receive his embrace and blessing and get off to bed as fast as they can.

*“November 26th, 1873.* Yesterday was the feast of St. Catherine, the patroness of young maidens, which is a great holiday in France. Of course, we had grand doings at the convent,—no lessons all day, a lottery and games in the morning, a concert in the afternoon, extra courses at dinner, and theatricals in the evening. In the morning, while we were in the midst of some exciting games, Fanny N. .... came rushing to me in a state of despair. One of the plays that evening was to be the ghost scene from Hamlet, got up among the girls of the English class, and they wanted me to take the place of Alice de L. ...., who had had the second part. I was horrified at the thought of acting with so little preparation; but I finally consented, to prevent the play's falling through, for Fanny N. ...., who had the principal part,

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

knew it so splendidly that it would have been too bad not to give her the chance to distinguish herself. So that whole day I haunted the garden, book in hand, like the troubled spirit I was, missing the concert and half the other good things. Just before dinner we had a rehearsal, and it was some compensation for my woes to be drilled by Sister Marie N....., a pretty English nun, with whom I am much in love. Things looked rather hopeless at this rehearsal. My part went haltingly enough, and it turned out that Bertha V....., who was Bernardo, didn't know the first word of hers, and stumbled so over what she did know that we were afraid we should have to give up the play, after all. But at dinner the girls found out the trouble we were in, and were full of sympathy, and eager to get up a petition from the whole school begging the superioress to release Alice de L..... just for this one night to act; then she could take Bertha's part, which she knew as well as her own. In honor of the holiday we were allowed to talk in the

## An Echo from Parnassus

refectory, to change our places, and sit wherever we liked. The uproar that ensued in this great room full of girls chattering, laughing, shouting across the room to one another, dragging heavy benches over stone floors, and dropping cups and knives on the marble-topped tables, was enough to have driven the whole community distracted. Sister Françoise was as indulgent as possible, for she likes to have us enjoy ourselves; but at last things came to such a pass that she brought down her gavel on the table with a rap that hushed us in an instant. We listened with downcast faces while she said that we were not only very ill-bred, but were abusing our privileges, and now we might finish the meal in silence. At this a few Moyennes rebelled; but as they were the principal offenders, we Grandes quickly hushed them down, and we sat the rest of dinner in mournful, silent rows. After dinner, when we were free again, the girls renewed their offer of begging for Alice's release, and a deputation was formed to be

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

sent to the superior-general. It was suggested that the proper person to head it would be the Princess d'Orleans, and so the deputation adjourned to the little parlor where the princess had been dining with the Ribbons. Poor little Madame was much urged, and had a hard time of it. She refused at first; but the girls thought it was from shyness, so they teased her to go, painting our case and the disasters that would ensue if Alice were not to act, in the most dismal colors, and reminding her that this was the first chance she had ever had to do anything for her schoolmates. The poor child hesitated a long time, divided in her mind between her feeling that the superioress was right in punishing Alice, and her eager wish to be popular with her playfellows. She colored, and the tears came into her eyes; but she was firm in refusing, confiding in Anne de G. .... that she thought the nuns knew better than we what was good for Alice's character, and we ought not to interfere with their plans and give them the pain of refusing us. Some

## An Echo from Parnassus

of the girls were provoked with Madame, and muttered 'Little prig,' and 'She's afraid,' but most of the Ribbons came forward and supported her, taking their stand against the deputation. However, they couldn't prevent its starting off. After they had gone, Horatio, Bernardo and I repaired to the dressing-room to get ready, studying our parts till the last moment, and Sister Marie N. .... flying round to put us in order. We mingled with the audience after the acting was over, and had a jolly time of it. Cakes and candy were passed free to the actors, and fruit and lemonade sold among the girls, who feel justified in wasting their substance on such things, as the proceeds go to the poor. Since the English play turned out a success, the girls seem to have experienced a revulsion of feeling. I found them all saying that it was just as well Alice had not been allowed to act; that she would learn that she was not all-important on such occasions, as she seemed to think herself; and they couldn't understand her being so obsti-

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

nate; while Madame, the 'little prig,' has become quite a heroine in their eyes for having taken the stand she did.

*"Thursday, December . . . . .* The third division in history, Sister Marguerite's class in the Middle Ages, came down in quite an excited frame of mind this evening. It is a large class, made up mostly of Moyennes, and contains a number of girls as full of mischief as any in the school. Sister Marguérite has had a good deal of trouble all winter in trying to keep order and silence during the recitations, and now to-night the girls reached a pitch of noise and dissipation that made lessons almost impossible. Bad notes, usually so effectual, were now of no avail, and as one by one the older girls got led away by the spirit of mischief that prevailed, poor Sister Marguérite felt that all authority was fast slipping from her hands; and when at last little, quiet, demure Madame, to the delight of the offenders, could resist their overtures no longer, but began, too, to join

## An Echo from Parnassus

in the pranks, she felt that something desperate must be resorted to. With a rap on the desk that made everyone jump, she said, sternly, 'Mercédès!' The princess started to her feet, and turned crimson, and the girls looked up to hear what was coming next. Sister Marguérite went on gravely: 'Mercédès, I am grieved to see you encouraging this conduct in your classmates. You may go and stand at the door till the class is quiet.' All was hushed in an instant, and the girls were aghast; for to stand at the door is considered one of the most humiliating of punishments, and is seldom resorted to except with the Petites. The door of the recitation-room is a glass one, leading into the hall, right at the foot of the staircase where people are continually passing; so that the offender, who stands outside, is in full sight of the passers-by, as well as of the class. The girls looked wonderingly at each other, at the mistress, then at the princess, to see what she would do. For a moment she hesitated, then she turned and walked

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

quickly, with head bent down, to the door, opened it, went out and stood there with her hands folded and with a very red face. This step had the desired effect of bringing the class to order, for there was hardly a girl but felt she deserved the punishment far more than Madame. However, Sister Marguerite let her stay there several minutes. Just as she was about to call her back, down the stairs came the good, kind mistress of class, who has a soft spot in her heart for all little sinners, and who couldn't help laughing at Madame's discomfiture at being seen in such a position, and, embracing her, led her back to class, asking Sister Marguerite if the child hadn't been doing penance long enough. From this till the end of the lesson, the girls were all like little models. This evening, after Madame had left, the nuns told us that after class, she came up to Sister Marguerite and thanked her for having given her this punishment, saying, 'You have reminded me that, in my position, I ought always to give the highest example.'

## An Echo from Parnassus

I hope I never shall forget it.' She always takes a reproof in such good spirit that I don't wonder the nuns think so much of her.

*"December 29th, 1873.* The dreadful day of judgment is passed and the New-year's vacation is at hand. The last week has been taken up by the quarterly examinations, and yesterday was the grand 'Lecture des Notes' —an ordeal dreaded by good and bad alike. I was curious to see how the Princess d'Orléans would fare on this occasion; but she had to take her share, as I supposed. Madame, it was said, had given perfect satisfaction in her behavior, and studied very well in class, but she did not make the progress they could wish in her private lessons. Also, her English teacher remarked an aversion on Madame's part to talk in any language other than her own, whereupon the superiority gave a little lecture on the necessity of conversation in becoming familiar with a language. That reminds me of a funny scene at the English examination, where Ma-

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

dame was called upon to recite something. She chose Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life,' and stood up quite bravely at first. She did very well till about half-way through, and then, all at once, she got stuck, and the first thing we knew she had utterly disappeared from view. The child had been so mortified at her failure that in her embarrassment she sat down; but so comic an effect had this sudden disappearance that the whole room burst out laughing. Nothing would persuade Madame to get up and face us again. On the whole, the nuns have been most kind and indulgent to us. I suppose they have had a great deal of experience with children and know how it is best to deal with them in the long run.

*"February 1st, 1874, à l'Infermerie.* The superior-general's feast was a most successful day throughout. We were not told till the night before who had been chosen for the ribbons, and of course I was quite excited to find that I was to be one of the four new

## An Echo from Parnassus

aspirants. Madame la Princesse d'Orléans was also one, and three aspirants were chosen for the white ribbon, all of them girls who are very popular in the school. The reception was to have taken place right after early Mass, but at the time appointed Madame never appeared. We waited and waited and got no message, and at last it got so late we had to go on without her. We were given the ribbons in chapel, kneeling before the altar, in our veils, and with lighted tapers in our hands. There was some lovely singing, and as we left the chapel the girls crowded round us to give us their congratulations, and in the midst of the general rejoicing Madame made her appearance. We were all inquiry, but could get nothing out of her, and she was taken off immediately to apologize to the superioress. We were curious to find out why she hadn't come, and as well as we could gather from different sources, the case seemed to be this: When the nuns told her she was to have the ribbon, she was much surprised, for she had

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

thought that, being only a day scholar, she would not be allowed to wear it. She was very much affected, and kept repeating that she didn't deserve it; that not spending the nights here, she didn't have half the temptation to break rules that the other girls had, and she was afraid they offered it to her more to remind her that she ought to have it than because she really had earned it. After she got home, she decided that she would be better satisfied to wait till the next reception, in June, to be made aspirant, and feel sure in her own mind that she deserved the ribbon. Whether she consulted with her parents or not, I don't know. I believe she did, and that they sustained her in refusing; but at any rate she dreaded so having a fuss made over it, that she said nothing about the reception being at such an early hour, and did not come out till her usual time. Some of the girls thought she had no right to be so scrupulous, but that she ought to take the ribbon, if the nuns gave it to her, and try to deserve it afterward. At any rate, we are

## An Echo from Parnassus

all sorry not to have Madame an aspirant, for she has made herself very much liked by her sweet, modest ways, and the spirit with which she enters into all our doings. Yet, on the whole, I don't know but that she is more popular than ever, for French nature is so quick to see and admire anything a little above the common standard, and the ribbon is so much thought of here. As blunt, honest Augustine M..... said, 'I never could have refused it, if I had felt I deserved it ever so little; why, my shoulders fairly ached to wear it!' When the princess came back she was very cordial in congratulating us, kissing us on both cheeks, as the other girls had done; but, I fancied, looking a bit wistfully at our decorations.

*"March, 1874.* Madame is in the deepest mourning now, for she has just lost her brother and playfellow, the young Prince Ferdinand of Montpensier, a year older than herself. She had the measles a little while ago and was away from school some time.

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

She only had them slightly, but her brother caught them and died after a few days' illness. It is very sad, for now the only son left is a sickly little fellow of seven or eight. Madame has been quieter than ever since she got back, and no wonder.

*“July, 1874.* There have been a good many changes lately in the school. Sister Madeleine, the lovely mistress of the Moyenne class, has had to be sent to some baths on account of her health, and since then, instead of appointing a new mistress, the class has been put under the charge of the Ribbons, and we take turns in guarding it.

I wear the white ribbon now, so I come in for more than the usual responsibilities of my station. To do the Moyennes justice, they have behaved extremely well. They feel put on their honor to be silent and good when they have only one of their own companions to look after them, and everyone remarks how quiet and studious they are. How long the supernatural goodness will last it is im-

## An Echo from Parnassus

possible to tell. The Princess d'Orléans is now aspirant, and has worn the purple ribbon for one month.\* Madame has just been formally betrothed to the Prince Alfonso. There has been a great family gathering, and she was absent from school for several days, and when she came back we knew it had all been arranged. Poor child, I am afraid she will have an uncomfortable life of it in such an unsettled country as Spain."

The little princess was not destined to live long after her marriage to Alfonso XII. But a curious incident connected with her death made a profound impression on me. She became deeply attached to one of her fellow-pupils at Auteuil—and when the inevitable day of separation came, and Mercédès left to ascend her throne, they made a mutual promise that should either of them die, the one to go first would seek to have the other follow her. As it happened, at the

\* The Princess d'Orléans received the white ribbon and medal of Society of the "Enfants de Marie," in the spring of the following year.

## A Pigmy Looks at a Queen

time of Mercédès' death, her friend was also ill, although everyone had carefully kept from her any word of the little Queen's danger. But her request was granted. She died within a few hours of the moment when Mercédès of Orléans, Infanta of Spain, breathed her last.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THERE ARE STILL PIGMIES AND GIANTS

HAVE I, perhaps, told enough of a Victorian girlhood to dispel in slight measure that cloud of legend which so obscures for us to-day some of the intensely human beings of sixty and seventy years ago? I do not know. To me these people are still so vivid, so much of the present day temper, that I wonder if our own times have really changed as much as we like to boast. Are parents really more enlightened, more eager to enter tactfully into the lives and interests of their children? Haven't subways and taxi-cabs and radios and airplanes and all the mechanics of our busy lives blinded us a bit to the deeper springs of human feeling that persist?

It still delights me to talk with the eager

## There Are Still Pigmies and Giants

young enthusiasts who are taking up the cudgels that some of us must soon lay down—and I cannot truthfully say that the quality of their interest in the great and fine chances of life differs much from that of the friends of my childhood. There is, perhaps, more confusion of purpose, partly because careers are more complex and varied. There is less patience and more impetuosity in dealing with homely facts and truths. But the appetite for truth seems quite as keen as ever. How many hours I have spent in recent years chatting and discussing the deeds of the day with those nearly half a century younger than I—yet quite unconscious for the moment of any difference in age. Would this be possible if the training of my younger days were so totally at variance with our own times as a few enthusiastic writers think?

Pigmies and giants still seem to walk abroad, hand in hand, as Longfellow once plowed through the slush of Brattle Street towering above me. The new political leaders are quite as picturesque as those of my

## An Echo from Parnassus

youth. A new race of heroes wings in the clouds above us. The world is much smaller through our conquest of space, but vastly larger as the microscope reveals more of its inner mysteries. The sum total of the challenge which modern life plants before us is great enough to thrill the most prosaic mind. We have grown large in knowledge, but the adventure of finding wisdom leaves us all still pygmies.

And so I venture to believe that we may gratefully accept with the days of my youth the common tie of trials, of hope, of conflicts fought bravely, of fun and zest and irrepressible humor, of tragedy when it must be met, and of daring in all that lifts us above ourselves. Our pilgrimage is too short to try to believe that we, of to-day, are the only wanderers who have sought to walk with steadfast humility, and honestly, before God.

## “A BROKEN MOLD”

BY THE SON OF THE AUTHOR,

R. DANA SKINNER

AFRIEND, after an hour or more spent with my mother chatting on every subject from sports and jazz music to the latest play, symphony and events in world diplomacy, came away with the remark, “After making a few of her type, they broke the mold.”

Yet she belonged, in fact, to no particular day or age. In many ways, she was always the youngest member of any group—vividly aware of the currents of modern life, following baseball scores and the careers of certain race-horses as keenly as the most recent European complication or the work of the youngest literary genius. She had the analytical mind of a trained thinker, the

## An Echo from Parnassus

eager curiosity of a child, the sensitiveness of an artist, and the abounding and outgoing sympathy of a woman whose imagination and romantic sense were always a few paces ahead of her own day. Occasionally she would admit needing a short time "to get adjusted" to some startlingly fresh explosion of flapperdom or Bolshevism—but the "adjustment" never failed to come, and with it a buoyant desire to find the best in the new symptom rather than the worst. I doubt if she ever worried about "what this generation is coming to." *This* generation was always peculiarly her own—to-day always too absorbingly alive to permit futile pessimism about to-morrow or vain languishings over a vanished yesterday.

So far as there was any truth in the thought of the "broken mold," it lay in this—that the amazing inclusiveness of her interests was the direct outcome of early training in a period so commonly regarded as repressive and narrowing. When groups of her elders used to meet, instead

## “A Broken Mold”

of being sent off to bed or studies, she was allowed to curl up on a footstool in front of the fire and listen, wide-eyed, while they talked over the matters they found vital and absorbing. History took on all the hue and impulse of daily adventure when so much of it dropped from her grandfather's lips—a man whose own father had known Washington, Franklin, and the two Adamses, and had spent two years as first American Minister at the Court of Russia trying to persuade Catherine the Great to recognize American independence. And as for the stirring events of her own day, her amazingly large and amazingly blue eyes must have looked out on a distracted world with much the same blending of timidity and wide curiosity with which they peer from a certain little daguerreotype taken when she was three—eyes welcoming an understanding world, ready to glisten at the approach of adventure, to dilate with wonder at an heroic story, or to dissolve in tears at some little tragedy which she might hear of and all too

## An Echo from Parnassus

promptly share as if it were her own. This “mold” that shaped her life was one of encouragement, of the sympathy of age with extreme youth, and of a willingness to feed a growing mind with the food it sought.

Her older sisters, as well as her father and mother, read with her and encouraged her talents for drawing and music. She was allowed to be a thorough tomboy when the impulse to climb trees mingled with the one to act out the lives of heroes in the garden or orchard. Certainly, as she has said, no one curbed or “repressed” her reading or her play or her apparently endless questions. I am sure her father would have done his best to make Relativity clear to his ten-year-old youngest if Einstein had lived then; and equally sure that she would have asked about it—not with any conscious idea of being precocious, but because the whole world always seemed to her a storehouse of discovery which it was one’s chief pleasure to empty, knowing that it would always be refilled by to-morrow morning. If she retained the

## “A Broken Mold”

conviction to her last day that life yielded back just about what she sought from it, the reason can be found in the attitude of those who illuminated her childhood.

The picture she has sketched in the preceding pages covers in perspective her first sixteen years. Her later life was a constant expansion of the same wide interests. There were other trips abroad, following her school days in Paris. These included nearly two years spent in Italy, during part of which time she acted as secretary to her father in the preparation of a work on international law; a trip to Halifax, when her father represented the United States as Counsel in the fisheries dispute, and a trip “abroad” to our own South. She became an accomplished linguist, able to speak French, German and Italian with hardly a trace of accent, and to read Dutch, Spanish and Russian easily. It was quite characteristic of the training she had received from her father in fair-mindedness that she studied Russian chiefly to be able to get at first hand the true facts

## An Echo from Parnassus

about Russia following the Russo-Japanese war. She felt that the American press was giving chiefly the side of the popular idol of the day, Japan. Incidentally she learned Russian practically by herself, with only ten lessons from an instructor, and after she was well over forty-five.

She was just twenty-one when her first writings appeared. *Scribner's Magazine* published the letters she had written while at the French Convent with the prospective Queen of Spain, and shortly afterward, the *Atlantic Monthly* accepted an article on the education of French girls. At this time she had rather small courage about writing. It would hardly have occurred to her that she *could* write, except for the insistent encouragement she received from her father. Her first novel, as a matter of fact, did not appear until several years after her marriage in 1892, although she had started it some time before. It took her husband's constant urging to make her complete it and submit it in 1899 to Harpers, who promptly accepted

## “A Broken Mold”

and published it with marked success. This book, “*Espiritu Santo*,” dealt with the life of musical circles in Paris, and received high praise from such men as William Dean Howells. Curiously enough, after twenty-eight years, it still has a substantial sale and is used in the English courses of certain schools as an example of style and effective simplicity.

Another novel, “*Heart and Soul*,” followed quickly, written at the request of her publishers around the people of early Detroit. It appeared in the year when Detroit was celebrating its bi-centenary and at once became one of the “six best sellers” in the Middle West. It re-created the days just before and after the Civil War when Detroit still held its character of an old French city, when curious and eerie legends still survived among the older French families, and when adventure stalked abroad in the operations of the “underground railroad” for the rescue of fugitive slaves. The story also spread afield to Paris after the Commune, and re-

## An Echo from Parnassus

flected in countless ways the loves and enthusiasms which, by her rich training, had become part of my mother's being.

Her third and fourth novels appeared some years later. One of them, "Faith Brandon," was a story of pre-revolutionary Russia, for which she gathered much of her material by reading in original Russian sources—memoirs, fiction and contemporary newspaper accounts. The other, "Their Choice," was a brief and charming fantasy inspired by a summer spent at Scheveningen in Holland. She also contributed short stories, articles and book reviews to various magazines, including some delightful translations of the poetic love songs of the Tuscan peasantry which she had collected in Italy. Although the sum total of her writings was not large in comparison with the literary mass production of many modern writers, everything she wrote had a definite distinction and simple grace, with the clear characteristics of the "mold" in which her early tastes had been formed.

## “A Broken Mold”

Nor could any editor of a weekly magazine have kept in closer touch with the daily drama of world events than my mother, obedient to the trained impulses of her childhood. Nothing seemed to escape her. Her knowledge of international law made her an acute and discerning student of every least current in world politics. Some magazine articles which she wrote during and after the World War displayed her complete mastery of the European background; and so late as the last year of her life, she would outline the obscure origins of various treaties and diplomatic struggles with a clarity and accuracy of memory that would shed relief over many a college class in history. During part of the war, she lived in Switzerland, and rather than be swayed too strongly by any one side, she read at least four newspapers every day—French, German, Italian and English.

One must add to this—in order to discover just how far her Victorian training lent resource and zest to her later life—the eager-

## An Echo from Parnassus

ness with which she followed any special hobby that caught her attention. As one example, she studied the craftsmanship of the old violin makers, and became, in time, the owner of an exceptionally fine collection of rare instruments. She bought them with the knowledge of a connoisseur, and regarded them with an almost personal affection. Her knowledge and love of paintings by old and new masters alike was almost as keen and discriminating. Then, too, she followed closely such mundane matters as sports, the development of jazz music, prohibition enforcement (or its absence), local politics, aviation, finance and the securities markets, the tariff and other economic questions, and, of course, those popular murder cases which involved the elements and mystery of a good detective yarn. In fact, she was quite an authority on the best detective fiction. Whatever she read, she remembered, and her conversation, as she would sit in a large arm-chair, white-haired, dignified, but radiant with interest, flowed as easily from one sub-

## “A Broken Mold”

ject to another as if the springs of her enthusiasm could never run dry.

Her own life, and her utterly simple and sturdy religious faith (for which she could always find good supporting reasons, as it was a faith she had adopted and not been born to) exerted, of course, an abiding influence on everyone with whom she came in contact. But that, however, is largely a personal matter, and what I have tried to show is the importance of her life in a rather larger way as the outgrowth of a particular set of circumstances and a special environment which this country will hardly produce again. She represented the accomplishment of thoughts, ideals, emotions and interests which accumulated to her through a childhood as completely Victorian as one could hope to find—spanning in her memory the years of great and tumultuous transitions in American life, culture and attainment.

Above all, she paid her final tribute to the generation that gave her birth in the warm, quick-flowing impulses which made her love

## An Echo from Parnassus

persons far more than ideas, and which made her pleasure in the new discoveries of children or younger friends far keener than in any memory, no matter how rich, that clung from the past. The quotation she repeated most often was that which tells us that "the tragedy of age is not that we are old, but that we are young"—yet her own ever-inconsistent youthfulness of spirit was never in this sense a tragedy for her. Her misgivings concerning her own abilities, which she never quite escaped, and a certain lack of aggressiveness, may have covered many a hidden dark hour. But she emerged from them with the unfailing courage of youth, which gave to each of her trials its own resurrection.

It is, I think, lives like hers which attain the fine and delicate balance between youth and age, between dreams that lend inspiration and stern realities that demand courageous action. As she drew the fullness of her own days from the men and women she has described in this book, so the warmth and

## “A Broken Mold”

generosity and eagerness of her own spirit have passed on the heritage to those who knew her, or will come to know her through this record she has left. She died as she had lived, with her last mortal presence a benediction to those who loved her and whom, even more, she had loved.

APRIL 21ST, 1928.

THE END





**DATE DUE**

APR 25 1996

PS  
2859  
.5173  
E3  
1928

An echo from Parnassus  
PS2859.S173E3 1928



3 5033 0009 6645 7